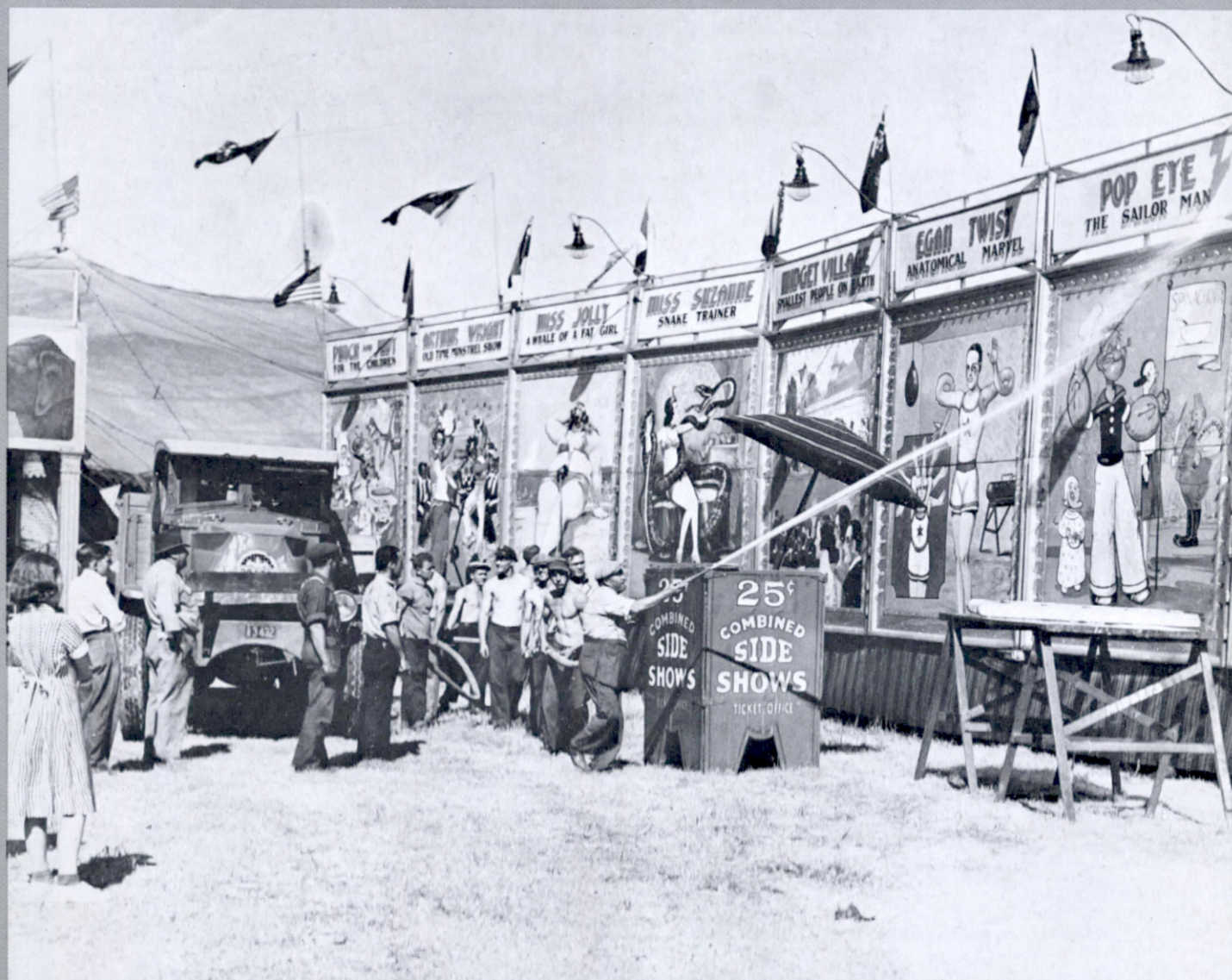


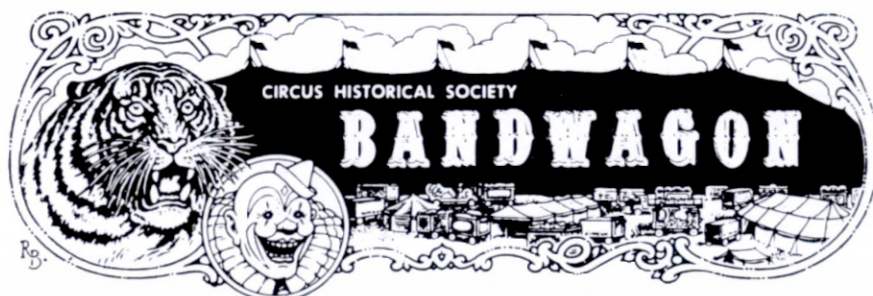
# Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



MARCH-APRIL 1980





# THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Vol. 24, No. 2

## March-April 1980

Fred D. Pfening, Jr. Editor

Joseph T. Bradbury and Fred D. Pfening III, Associate Editors

BANDWAGON, The Journal of the Circus Historical Society is published bi-monthly. Editorial, Advertising and Circulation office is located at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221. Advertising rates are: Full page \$80.00, Half-page \$40.00, Quarter page \$20.00, Minimum ad \$18.00.

Subscription rates \$13.50 per year to members, \$13.50 per year to non-members in the United States, \$15.00 per year outside the U.S.A. Single copies \$2.25 each plus 90¢. Second class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio.

BANDWAGON (USPS 406-390) is published bi-monthly for \$13.50 per year by the Circus Historical Society, 800 Richey Rd., Zanesville, Ohio 43701. Second class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BANDWAGON, 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43212.

CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. Tom Parkinson, President, 42 Lange Ave., Savoy, Ill. 61874; Richard W. Flint, Vice President, 700 Allen Creek Rd., Rochester, N.Y. 14618; Edward L. Jones, Secretary-Treasurer, 800 Richey Rd., Zanesville, Ohio 43701.

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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

The photo on our cover was taken in 1937 and shows Mack AC-4 #129 being used to wash down the bannerline wagons of the side show of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey combined shows.

The photo was taken by Leroy Sweetland.

### NEW MEMBERS

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### DUES NOTICES IN MAIL

You should have received your CHS dues/subscription notice by now. Please return your payment in the envelope provided. Prompt payment will be most appreciated.

To clear any misunderstanding, the regular dues for subscription is \$13.50. If you wish to lend extra financial help to the Circus Historical Society you may become a Sustaining Member for \$25, or a Contributing Member at \$50. Both the Contributing and Sustaining payment cover only the current year, and do not extend membership beyond one year.

### CHS CONVENTION PLANS

Plans for the July convention of CHS are taking shape, and early signs are for a record-breaking attendance, according to President Tom Parkinson. Numerous members already have indicated their plans to attend.

The convention will be tied in with the mammoth free street parade to be revived on July 5 by the Circus World Museum at Baraboo, Wisconsin. CHS conventioners will take part in the parade activities and then join for the 1980 convention's first event, a talkfest on the evening of July 5.

The program on July 6 and 7 will include a circus feature film festival, visits to the Museum's own circus and parade, historical papers, use of the enlarged Library, tour of the old Ringling car barns, a side trip to the Al Ringling Theater, several meal events and the annual banquet with surprise features. Activities also will spill over into the morning of July 8.

Those planning to attend should notify Parkinson by June 20, if possible, but late-comers will be welcome. The president also asked that members with historical papers to present contact him about time on the program.

Information about motels available in the area is available from Parkinson or from the Circus World Museum.

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# SMITHSONIAN CELEBRATION INCORPORATES CIRCUS

The Smithsonian Institution's Division of Performing Arts has announced a spring festival of American show business to be held in Washington, D.C., April 25-27, at the National Museum of History and Technology (between the Washington Mall and Constitution Avenue near 14th Street). CHS vice-president Richard Flint has been retained by the Smithsonian since last summer as planning consultant responsible for the development of the overall project.

For circus enthusiasts, there will be a small circus performance featuring John Herriott as well as some other circus acts on a vaudeville stage. A clown alley will feature, among others, Lou Jacobs. A circus side show under a tent will face the Washington Mall. Inside the museum will be demonstrations of clown shoe making and tent making. Continuous movies will be shown in the museum's auditorium including several documentaries about the circus. A special concert of circus music will be given by the United States Marine Band on Saturday, April 26, at 3:00 p.m.

Other activities will feature demonstrations and performances in other areas of American show business including a restored and operating Ferris wheel built in 1923.

The Smithsonian Institution's Division of Performing Arts expects to continue the spring celebration of American popular entertainment on an annual basis. Plans for the 1981 event include an academic conference.

## BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

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Price is now \$2.25 each. Add 90¢ postage.

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# BOOKS FOR THE COLLECTOR

Below are two of the finest books in their field, each written by experts on the subject.

## BULLDOG: The World's Most Famous Truck

by John B. Montville

This truck had the longest production run of any truck. Here is the tale of its design, production, uses and company policy. Illus. include beer, dump, mine and war trucks and buses. Appendices include numbers of every "Bulldog" manufactured, with tech. spec.; 11 x 8½, 200 pages, 322 illus.  
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## BULLDOG

By John B. Montville



THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS TRUCK

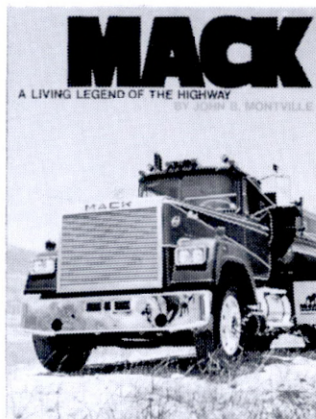
## MACK: The Greatest Name in Trucks, Revised Edition

by John B. Montville

Traces the development of the Mack Truck Company. Engineering development, designers and personalities, corporate intrigue—all are equally and uncompromisingly investigated. Profusely illustrated; appendices include every model ever built, its year, serial number and modifications. 8½ x 11, 220 pages, 304 illus.

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# MACK BULL DOGS The Power Behind The Circus

By Fred D. Pfening

The fine new book *Bulldog* by John B. Montville has prompted a detailed search to record the number of Mack AC trucks used by circuses in the period from 1918 to 1958. Without question the Mack AC was the most popular truck in the sawdust world during these years. But of the thousands upon thousands of Mack ACs manufactured perhaps only three dozen were used by circuses. Some were purchased new but most were used when they found their way to the circus.

Trucks of various kinds had been used by the circus before the Mack AC was first introduced. The first motor truck, or tractor, as they were frequently called appeared on the Sells-Floto Circus. Capt. William H. Curtis contributed more to the mechanization of the circus than any other individual with such innovations as his patented canvas spool wagon and folding seat wagons. As superintendent and master mechanic of the Sells-Floto Circus Bill Curtis is generally credited with introducing a motorized unit to pull wagons from the runs to the lot. Charles Brady, who was property boss on the Floto show in its early days, reported some years ago that Curtis purchased a three wheel Knox tractor in 1909. This unit called "One Eyed John" because of its single headlight, was an odd looking vehicle. It was a 60 h.p. tractor and when first brought to the show was termed in the *Billboard* as the "New Sells-Floto Velocipede Motor." By 1916 the Floto show had purchased a more conventional four wheeled Knox truck, with chain drive. The Barnum & Bailey show purchased a Knox

tractor of the same design and a dated photo shows one on that show in 1917. The Knox trucks were the first to be seriously used by circuses and one was used as late as 1935 by the Hagenbeck-Wallace Forepaugh-Sells Circus.

In 1916 Al G. Barnes purchased at least two Republic trucks. These were light duty and carried an air calliope and a cage. In 1917 Frank Spellman made a deal with the Kelly-Springfield Truck Corporation for a number of units for the United States Motorized Circus. The Service Motor Co., of Wabash, Indiana, supplied a number of trucks for the 1918 Coop & Lent motorized circus. The hoods on the Service trucks looked much like the snub nose hoods of the Mack ACs. The Lucky Bill Show, operated by Honest Bill Newton, also used Service trucks around 1917. In 1913 the Buffalo Bill-Pawnee Bill Wild West Show used two Studebakers as sprinkler trucks.

Around 1920 another truck manufacturer made some sales to circuses. The Pierce Arrow Motor Car Co., of Buffalo, N.Y. produced a fine heavy duty chain driven truck. Andrew Downie purchased one of these for his Walter L. Main Circus as early as 1921. Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey also looked with favor upon the Pierce Arrow trucks, and used two of the units as late as the 1935 season. A third Pierce Arrow truck was sent to the Sells-Floto show from Sarasota in 1930 and this truck was also used on the 1935 Hagenbeck show.

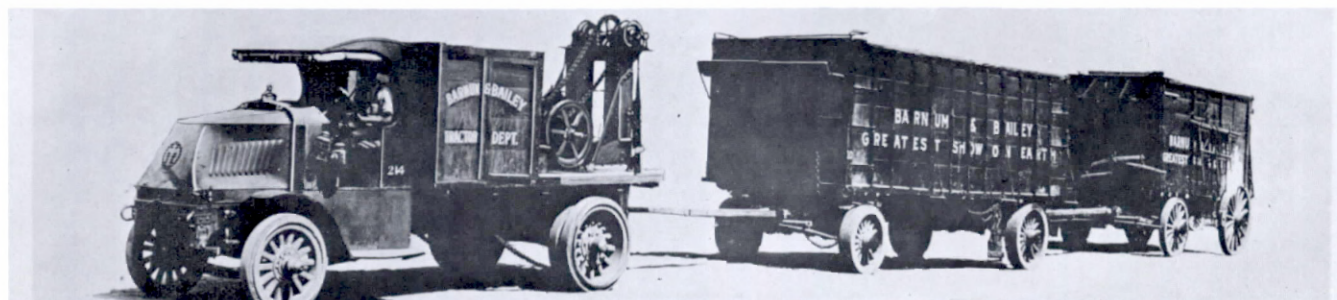
But the Mack AC was by far the most popular truck and dominated the market after its introduction. The first Mack AC to be used by a circus was a long wheel base unit on the

The complete motorized fleet of the Ringling-Barnum show is pictured in this 1948 photo. It shows 2 Jeeps, 5 small four wheel tractors, 7 small Caterpillars, 5 large Caterpillars, one with boom, 8 Mack ACs, 2 CJs (canvas trucks) and 3 new that year model LJs. The new #253 canvas LJ had been purchased in 1947 along with two LJ water trucks #238 and #239. Harold Dunn Collection.

Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1917 or 1918. The truck carried a gasoline driven stake driver on the back. Although the sister organization Ringling Bros. used Knox trucks during this period there is no evidence that there were ever any Macks on the Ringling show. The Mack and the Knox trucks from the Barnum show were used in 1919 on the combined shows.

With advances being made in truck design International Motors felt some pressure to change from the chain drive to a worm drive. In November 1920 an announcement was made by R.E. Fulton, Vice President of International Motors, saying "we will not build any more Mack AC models with a worm drive. We have for several years, built and tried out a great many types of worm drives on our AC models, but have not succeeded in finding any

This is the earliest photo of a Mack AC on a circus. It is believed to have been taken during the final season of the Barnum & Bailey show in 1918. The truck went to the combined shows in 1919 and was used as late as 1921 on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Harold Dunn Collection.







The narrow radiator and wood spoked wheels indicate that this Mack AC-3 had been manufactured prior to 1920. This photo was taken on Sells-Floto in 1929.

which is as satisfactory as our present chain drive. Other motor truck builders have had to sacrifice power and reliability to enable them to utilize the worm drive and were we willing to cut down the power of our motor, thereby limiting the usefulness of the truck, we could use the worm drive. This however, we will not do." And they did not for a number of years. In 1927 the Mack AK was introduced, a dual reduction version of the lightest capacity model AC. The AK had a four speed transmission and an optional high speed reverse gear. But even the model AK was available in a chain driven version.

The Sells-Floto Circus had a Mack AC in 1921, as pictured in the last issue of the *Bandwagon*. However this truck is a pre 1920 model and if purchased new it would have been on the show a year or so earlier. A 1923 inventory of the Floto show lists two Knox and one Mack truck. No information is available for the middle 1920s on the Floto trucks, but by 1929 there was one Knox and two Macks. One of the Macks was the pre 1920s model from Denver, an AC3, the other was a newer AC4 with the wider radiator. An official inventory in our file taken on September 29, 1930 in Nashville, Tenn., lists the following trucks on Sells-Floto that year: #4 New Mack, #5 Old Mack, #6 Knox and #7 Pierce Arrow (sent from Ringling-Barnum). During its final season of 1932 the Floto show carried #2 Knox, #6 Pierce Arrow and #4 Mack.

When the American Circus Corporation purchased the Sells-Floto Circus in 1920 it received a Mack AC truck, perhaps the first owned by that organization. In 1921 a pre-1920 Mack AC appeared on the Howes Great London Circus, it is not known if this truck had been on the 1920 Howes show, had come with the Yankee Robinson equipment purchase, or was purchased for use on the enlarged 1921 Howes show. The same truck was with the Gollmar Bros. Circus, the title used in 1922 on the former Howes show.

In 1922 the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus had two Knox trucks. A loading order for this show in 1923 lists two "tractors" the Knoxs, and one "auto truck". The auto truck was probably the Mack AC that had been on the



This photo of a Mack AC pulling the Five Graces bandwagon was taken on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1934 by Verne G. Fussell.

Howes and Gollmar shows. The Knox tractors had been with the show since purchased in 1918. The two Knox and one Mack probably remained in use on the Hagenbeck-Wallace show after the closing of the John Robinson and Sells-Floto shows.

In 1934 with the increased size of the Hagenbeck-Wallace show four trucks were used, two Knox, one older Mack, one newer Mack and a Pierce Arrow. The "new" Mack was no doubt the one purchased around 1929 for the Floto show. A loading order or wagon list is not available for the 1935 Hagenbeck-Wallace Forepaugh Sells Circus, however photo evidence shows that the "old" Mack, one Knox and the Pierce Arrow from Sells-Floto (former Ringling-Barnum) were on the show that year. It is a fair assumption that the newer

Mack would also have been used, and not left in quarters in favor of older trucks.

When Howard Y. Bary leased the Hagenbeck-Wallace show in 1937 he opened the season using two Mack ACs of late 1920 vintage. One of the trucks had a hoist for pulling stakes, the other carried the standard water tank with pump to spray the lot. During the season Bary bought five additional Chevrolet long wheel base trucks. Three of these were canvas loaders similar to the Mack CJs placed in use by the Ringling Barnum show in 1935. The numbers of these trucks

**BULLDOG:** The World's Most Famous Truck, by John B. Montville, AZTEX Corporation publisher. \$16.95.

As a follow up to his 1973 book *MACK*, the author now devotes a full volume to the wonderful chain driven MACK AC model that has been so closely associated with the circus.

The book covers the early days of the Mack Brothers Motor Car Company of Allentown, Pa., and its merger in 1911 with the Saurer Motor Co., of Plainfield, N.J. to form the International Motor Co. The front of the snub nosed hood on the Mack ACs carry the IM logo. But the thrust of the book covers the period from 1914 to today, covering the design and engineering concepts, as well as the individuals who were responsible for building this famous truck.

Design of the AC began in 1914, and road testing of a finished model in 1915. The 3 speed AC began full production in January of 1916 and continued until 1922. The AC4, with four forward speeds was introduced in 1922 and production continued until 1934.

Early in 1917 a British purchasing mission visited one of the Mack plants to inspect the Model AC, and promptly ordered 150 units. The British engineers dubbed the trucks Bull Dog Macks, because in appearance the pugnacious front and resolute lines suggested the tenacious British Bull Dog. From that time on they became Mack Bulldogs. In November 1917 a contract was issued by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for over four million dollars covering the purchase of a minimum of 900 units. These were the heaviest of the Macks, 5½ and 7½ ton versions of the AC. At that time production of the truck was running at a rate of 260 units a month. The Allentown factory had to be quickly enlarged to meet the growing business.

The first AC hoods were vented by a screen, this was changed to louvers in 1917. Until 1920 the wheels had wood spokes, the cast iron wheels replaced the original design that year. In the spring of 1922 a new wider radiator was introduced along with the four speeds. Radiator shutters were first used in 1925. In 1927 the front fender design was changed to a molded crown design, from the flat type originally used. The one piece windshield was introduced in 1929. These outside design changes help date trucks in photos. But many other engineering improvements are listed in the book.

The book contains 322 illustrations in its 200 pages. This most interesting volume is a must for those circus historians who have a special interest in the mechanical aspects of the circus.

—Fred D. Pfening, Jr.





**A long wheel base 1925 Mack AC in a 101 Ranch parade in 1930. The truck had been purchased new by the Ranch in 1925. Charles Kitto Photo.**

were #68, #81 and #82. One of these was delivered in Logansport, Ind. another in York, Pa., and another in Norfolk, Va. Canvas wagons of the same numbers were sent back to the Peru winter quarters. In addition Barry used two Chevy stake pullers, #1 and #2. The two Mack ACs and the five Chevys were all on the show again in 1938.

After the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus closed in Riverside, Ca., in the fall of 1938 the equipment was moved to the Barnes quarters in Baldwin Park, Ca. Most of the equipment was again used for a short time in 1939 on the Great American Circus. However the two Mack ACs were not used on Great American. In 1945 the Hagenbeck-Wallace equipment was used to outfit the Arthur Bros. Circus. Two Mack ACs were used on the Arthur show. During most of this research the author felt that the Arthur trucks were the two from Hagenbeck-Wallace, even though the water tanks were entirely different in design. The one H-W Mack with the hoist and center rail for stake pulling would have been of value to the Arthur show and is doubtful that this would have been removed in favor of a second water tank. Pat Graham who handled the moving of some of the H-W equipment for the Ringling interests says that one of the 1938 Macks was sent overland back to Peru, chugging along at 12 mph it would have been quite a trip. This is purported to have happened right after the show closed. It is very difficult to understand why this lone piece of equipment would have been selected for return to Peru, in view of lack of activity at the Peru winter quarters. No confirmation of this returned truck has been found. Conjecture at this point leads one to think that both Hagenbeck-Wallace Macks were sold shortly after the closing in 1938. As John Corson, the Arthur Bros. expert says, it is hard to believe that the two trucks which had general use would set with the wagons at Gobles place through the war years. The 1938 Hagenbeck-Wallace rail equipment had been scattered and Martin Arthur rounded up rail cars else where. At this point it may be assumed that the two Macks on the 1945 Arthur show were purchased used in the Los Angeles area, and makeshift water tanks were added. A comparison of the front wheels of one Arthur Mack shows more spokes than the standard Mack wheels of the H-W trucks.



The Arthur Macks traveled overland, not on the train, until the show reached Portland, Ore., seven weeks into the season. It was there that the short flat #24 was added to make train space for the trucks. The double tank Arthur Mack did not operate well and was usually unloaded and left at the runs each day. The show finally gave up on this truck and it was junked before the show reached the midwest.

It has been difficult to find definite information on the trucks used by the John Robinson Circus in the 1920s. A letter in our files dated in 1925 from Sam B. Dill to Jerry Mugivan refers to two tractors. A 1929 photo taken in Quincy, Ill., shows a pre-1929 Mack AC pulling four cages. A Koford photo taken in 1929 shows a Knox truck on a loaded flat. It would appear that the one Mack and one Knox were used by the Robinson show from 1925 until it closed in 1930. A light duty Republic truck was also in John Robinson in 1927, this unit however was not heavy enough to have pulled wagons.

Photos of the Peru, Indiana, winter quarters in the 1930s show a couple of stripped truck frames suggesting that parts had been removed from some trucks and used on others.

The largest single purchase of Mack trucks by an outdoor show was the one made in 1925 by the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Real Wild West. When the Miller Brothers purchased the Walter L. Main Circus in the fall of 1924 there was one Pierce Arrow truck with the equipment. This truck was discarded. Art Eldridge, as manager of the show, framed and built the wild west show from the Main equipment. In December 1924 he purchased two Mack AC long wheel base trucks from a dealer in Kansas City, Mo. Shortly later the Ranch show bought two Mack AB lighter duty trucks. These had a more conventional hood with the radiator at the front, but used the same open cab design. The wheels and front fender design was identical to the AC model. The ABs were long wheel base and chain driven. All four of the new Ranch Mack trucks carried van bodies. The ACs, #3 had buffalo head carvings and #4 had Indian head carvings. The ABs, #5 had a painted western scene and #6 another painted western scene. All four of the Macks were used in the parade each day as well as to pull wagons to and from the lot. In 1926 an additional Mack AC was added to the Ranch show this one, #2, was a shorter wheel base and was equipped with a center rail and hoist for pulling stakes. This Mack with the hoist was later to go to Cole Bros. in 1935. Following the closing of the Ranch show in 1931 it was returned to Martland, Okla. Much of the

**In addition to the ACs the Ranch show purchased two model "AB" Mack trucks. This photo clearly shows the engine hood design, with radiator in front. The cab and cast iron wheels are the same as the ACs. Two ACs are shown in the background. Author's collection.**

equipment was sold to Adkins & Terrell for the new Cole Bros. Clyde Beatty Circus in 1935. However the two Mack ABs and one of the ACs remained in Martland as late as November of 1936.

Another circus purchased Macks for the first time in 1925. Charles Sparks placed two apparently brand new Mack ACs on his show in 1925. One was a water tank and the other carried a hoist. The bodies of the trucks were altered slightly and by 1930 and 1931 both trucks carried water tanks with pumps for spraying the lot. The Sparks Macks were absorbed into the Ringling Barnum fleet following the close of the show at the end of the 1931 season.

The Buck Jones Wild West Show and Roundup Days used a Pierce Arrow truck during its short tour in 1929.

George W. Christy purchased a Mack AC in the early 1920s. The first photo available shows a pre-1920 Mack AC on Christy Bros. Circus in 1925. There are reports, but no confirmation, that Christy added a Mack AC to his Lee Bros. Circus in midseason of 1926. This may well be true as a second Mack appears on a 1929 loading order and may have been on the show in 1927 and 1928 as well. The original Christy Mack #5 had an open body, the other #6 had a high open body. The #6 was of a model year after 1922 as it had the wide radiator. The #6 Christy Mack was sold to the Cole show in 1935.

The Robbins Bros. Circus operated by Fred Buchanan had one Mack AC in its final years of 1929, 1930 and 1931. Photos of the Robbins Mack are not too clear, but it was probably an early model that Buchanan had purchased used. The Mack was on the list of equipment from the Robbins show that William P. Hall offered in 1932. It is not known if the Robbins Mack was purchased by Adkins & Terrell along with the other equipment brought from the Hall Farm to the Cole show in 1935. However the Robbins Mack was not used by Cole and it is doubtful that it came to Rochester.

Al G. Barnes had pioneered the use of motor trucks with the use of light duty Republic trucks in 1916. That same season the famous





**The Sparks Circus added two Mack ACs to the show for the 1925 season. The front fender clearly shows the pre-1927 fender design. Headlights were added along with windshields in the late 1920s. Eddie Jackson Photo.**

Barnes electric bandwagon was used, this was a motor driven unit.

We are most fortunate to have an extensive file of original letters from S.L. Cronin to Jerry Mugivan during the winter of 1928-1929 reporting on the daily progress of preparing the newly purchased Barnes show for its first tour under the ownership of the American Circus Corporation.

A letter dated February 15, 1929 talks about not being able to find the certificate of title for the Mack purchased by Barnes two years earlier (1927). This would date the first Mack AC to be used on the Barnes show as the 1927 season. A letter dated February 16, 1929 says, "we ordered a new Mack tractor Thursday. Same to be delivered in about three weeks. Ordered it from the Los Angeles factory branch, which is the largest on the Coast. In fact, the day we were there, they had forty big trucks come in by boat from the eastern factory. Am enclosing a copy of the order, showing price. Had a few changes specified, after investigating tractors thoroughly by talking to agents, drivers, and Red Forbes, our mechanic. Had heavy pitch chain and sprocket made half inch larger than stock, which cost \$50.00 extra. Also changed to dual tires for

**This AC4 was purchased by Al G. Barnes in 1927, the beam and crane was added in 1929, the year this photo was taken. The crane was changed in 1930 and was removed around 1934, replaced with a water tank. William H.B. Jones Photo.**



**This photo of the Christy Bros. Circus in July 1925 shows a pre-1922 Mack AC-3. A newer model was added later, which went to Cole in 1935. Circus World Museum Collection.**

rear wheels, cost \$95.00 extra. They allowed us the 15% off the list, and the best I could do on the old caterpillar here was to get them to stretch the allowance for same \$100.00 more. These people furnished Barnes the tractor he bought two years ago.

"Will put the water tank on the new Mack, and the factory representative went over all details with Forbes and they made a diagram to work by after going over the drawing sent us by Sells-Floto. A pump has been ordered from Chicago by wire, they are building the tank out here, and will put tank and pump all complete on the new machine. This will cost us about \$250.00. The tractor will be delivered to us complete, with tank and pump working."

The original purchase order on a form used by Mack-International Motor Truck Corporation is most interesting. It is dated February 14, 1929, Los Angeles. The specs call for one 7 to 10 ton AC tractor, Chassis No. 7312629, Motor #C-856-12 at a cost of \$4967.50. To be equipped with a 128" wheel base, Mack cab and curtains, windshield, overload springs, North-East Electric Lighting System and Electric horn. Extra for 2" pitch heavy chain and sprockets \$50.00. Extra for 36 x 6 single front and 40 x 6 dual rear Kelly solid tires, type B \$95.00. Total cost \$5112.50. Allowance for Holt Caterpillar truck #44368 \$500.00, net cost \$4612.50. A \$100.00 cash deposit was made. It was signed Al G. Barnes Amusement Co., by S.L. Cronin.

On March 1, 1929 Cronin wrote to Mugivan advising that the old Mack was sent into today to the Mack factory branch to have a winch installed. The Smith-Ford winch, used 10 days, cost \$225.00, a Mack power take off was \$65.00 and the installation was \$60.00. Cronin added that the price of a new Mack winch is \$850.00 installed. In a letter dated February 16, 1929 addressed to Bert Bowers Cronin advised

that they intended to put a winch on the old tractor, which had none, and also to fit it with a crane like the one the 101 Ranch has. He added, "Forbes says that the crane will be valuable to us in case a wagon or cage breaks down en route to the cars or lot, it will not have to be jacked up with the crane ready to use."

So the Barnes show opened the 1929 season with two Mack AC trucks. The 1927 model had been equipped with the winch and crane mounted on a structural steel beam. The "U" frame supports for the crane beam was replaced sometime prior to 1934, when a new crane support was used, this looked much like a standard wrecking truck crane and hoist. The new 1929 model carried the steel water tank, the configuration of the truck remained the same. In 1936 the hard rubber tires were replaced on both Barnes Macks with pneumatic tires.

When the 1937 season of the Al G. Barnes Sells-Floto Circus opened the two Macks were used, however a third AC was purchased during the season. By now all three trucks were equipped with water tanks and pumps. The truck added in 1937 can be identified as the one with wood side boards on the top of the water tank. It was No. 3. The 1927 model was No. 1 and the 1929 No. 2. These numbers were used again in 1938.

When the Ringling-Barnum equipment was

**This AC shown on the Beatty show in 1947 had come by way of the Russell Pan Pacific show. The hose reel was added by Beatty.**







**In 1935 the new Cole Bros. Clyde Beatty Circus used the Christy Mack on the left and the Ranch crane unit on the right. Author's collection.**



**The third Mack AC on Cole in 1935 was this van unit. It also may have come from the Ranch show. Otto Greibling Photo.**

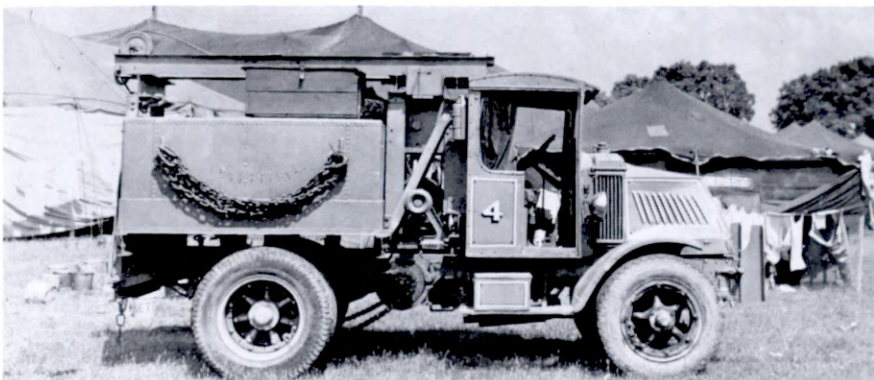
added to the enlarged Barnes show in Redfield, S.D., in 1938, RBBB Mack #135 was included. This RBBB Mack #135 carried a hoist and crane, and was selected to complement the Barnes Macks all with water tanks. All three of the Barnes Macks were incorporated into the Ringling-Barnum fleet in 1939 and saw further service there into the 1940s.

Next to the Greatest Show On Earth, Cole Bros. Circus used more Mack trucks than any other show in the history of the American circus.

While framing the new Cole Bros. Clyde Beatty Circus in 1935 equipment came from three different defunct shows. The 101 Ranch had six Macks, Christy Bros. two and Robbins Bros. one. However in selecting the equipment to purchase from these shows Adkins and Terrell picked only two and perhaps three Mack ACs. When the show opened in the spring of 1935, the Ranch Mack with the hoist and crane was used. The water tank truck from the Christy show, with slight modifications was used. A third long wheel base Mack AC with a van body was the third truck. This truck probably also came from the Ranch show, as there had been three long wheel base ACs, as well as two long wheel base ABs on that show.

A photo taken of a loaded flat taken in Covington, Ky., on May 11, 1935, shows the

**This Cole Mack was added to the show in 1941, it had a remodeled cab that differed from the standard Mack design. This photo was taken by the author in 1944.**



Ranch Mack with crane still with hard rubber tires. However photos taken later during the 1935 season show all three Macks equipped with pneumatic tires. The same trucks were used again in 1936. In 1937 a fourth short AC with a water tank, purchased from an oil company in Indianapolis, was added to the enlarged show. No photos of the van body appear in 1937 and this truck was no doubt remodeled.

In 1938 when the Robbins Bros. Circus was framed the new in 1937 water tank Mack from the Cole show was used. Three Macks were on Cole in 1938. When the show was cut down for the 1939 season only two Mack ACs were used.

On February 20, 1940 a fire in the Rochester, Ind. winter quarters destroyed the large wagon shed. *Billboard* reports at the time list two Mack ACs as being lost. However careful examination of photos taken right after the fire suggest that a third Mack was burned. One photo shows two Macks with water tanks, one of these was definitely the truck that had been on the Robbins show in 1938. The other truck parked at the right of the Robbins Mack had two boxes mounted on top of the water tank. Another photo shows the old 101 Ranch AC with the "I" beam and crane.

When the Cole show opened the 1940 season there were three Mack ACs. With the loss of at least two Macks in the Rochester fire it was necessary for the show to purchase additional trucks for the 1940 season. All three Macks carried water tanks.

In 1941, the first year at the new Louisville, Ky. fairgrounds winter quarters, a fourth Mack was added. The new in 1941 Mack had a water tank and a short crane. An old caterpillar 50 tractor was also added for the 1941 season, this unit was used only the one season. Two new Cat D7s and the fourth Mack were added

during the season. The new Mack #4 was equipped with an unusual cab design. A vertical panel with a rectangular window replaced the standard Mack curved roof and door opening. When first on the show this new truck was painted aluminum, and later blue. The other Macks were all the standard red. All of this additional motor power replaced the baggage stock that had been eliminated, other than four two horse train teams, for the 1941 season.

In 1942 the same four Mack ACs were used. Minor remodeling was done to #4 and the crane was fully exposed. The water tank on #2 was replaced with a van body, which carried tools, parts and wheels.

The same trucks were used in 1943, 44 and 45. In 1946 the boom and crane was removed from #4 and a marine water pump was installed, to provide additional fire protection. The show was sensitive to fire following the Ringling Barnum Hartford, Conn. catastrophe. The crane was transferred to one of the Caterpillars. The gas driven marine pump was used only the one year.

In 1947 the Cole show purchased a new Mack LJ truck. A water tank was placed on the new truck. Old AC #1 was dropped, being set aside for parts. During the season AC #3 gave out and was replaced by a used LJ, equipped with a Cummins diesel engine. The water tank from #3 was transferred to the LJ.

During the 1948 season ACs #2 and #4 and LJs #1 and #3 were used. After the show was

**Cap Curtis is shown looking over the new Mack LJ added to the Cole show in 1947. Chalmer Condon Photo.**





sold following the 1948 season, the new owners abandoned the two ACs and in 1949 and 1950 only the two Mack LJs were on the show.

In 1938 the Tim McCoy Real Wild West Show was framed, using all new wagons from the Springfield Wagon & Trailer Co. The flats and stock cars as well as all of the canvas was brand new. The rail coaches were bought used and remodeled. The only other used equipment on the beautiful new 30 car show were the four Mack AC trucks. The trucks were bought by Buster Cronin, the manager, in Chicago, Ill. Two were long wheel base and were equipped with large van bodies, these were #3 and #4. The two large trucks were identical except that #4 was equipped with an air compressor. The other two were short wheel base, with #1 fitted out with a water tank and pump. A hoist and crane was mounted on a steel beam on #2. The age of these trucks is not known, however the fender design suggests that all four were pre-1927 models. Following the close of the short lived show in Washington, D.C., Mack #1 with water tank was sold along with other assorted equipment to the Johnny J. Jones Exposition, a large railroad carnival.

In 1945 Arthur Concello framed the Russell Bros. Pan Pacific Circus on rails. The Russell show was a long established truck show through the 1944 season. Much of the old Russell truck show equipment including animals, canvas, seats and a few trucks was used on the 1945 show. However a number of wagons as well as rail cars came from the Beckmann & Garety carnival. The lone Mack AC on the 1945 show probably came from the carnival. The truck was equipped with a water tank and pump. Between the tank and the cab was a hose reel. Heavy bumpers were mounted on the front for pushing wagons.

The Russell show was sold in 1946 to Clyde Beatty, who had been associated with Concello in 1944 on the Beatty Russell truck show. In 1945 Beatty had operated his own show on trucks.

The 1945 Russell Mack AC went along with the other equipment to the 1946 Clyde Beatty Circus on rails. Among the other trucks on the Beatty show in 1946 was a cabover Chevrolet with a van body. This carried the blacksmith and carpenter shop. This truck #20 opened

**This 1930 photo shows the #134 Pierce Arrow water truck. It was used through the 1935 season. The sea elephant is in the wagon being pulled by the truck. Author's Collection.**



with the show again in 1947, but was in poor shape and wore out during the season. A second Mack with long wheel base was purchased on the road and the van body was transferred to it. Both the #19 water truck and the #20 blacksmith truck were on the Beatty show in 1948. The show wintered in Shreveport, La., during the winter of 1948-49. Both Macks were junked in Shreveport. From that time on the Beatty show used lighter duty trucks.

During the late 1940s the Dailey Bros. Circus used two Mack EQ trucks but at no time used BULLDOG ACs.

The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows was by far the largest user of the Mack AC Bulldog, with some trucks being used for 20 years.

Research has been difficult for the years from 1919 until 1931. Loading lists for these years are unavailable and photographs are all that allow Ringling-Barnum truck information during this period.

A 1921 photo taken by Karl K. Knecht shows a long wheel base Mack AC next to a rail coach. This truck with the narrow radiator and pre-1920 wood spoke wheels had a box body that was higher in the front. It is very possible that this was the Barnum & Bailey Mack AC that had been equipped with a stake driver and appears in a 1918 photo. No later photos of this early Mack have turned up. During this period it can be assumed that the Knox trucks that had been used on the Barnum and Ringling shows would have been available and some of them were no doubt used in the Early 1920s on the combined shows.

Sometime prior to 1925 the show purchased two additional Mack ACs and the older B&B truck was abandoned. The two level box body was moved to one of the newer trucks and in 1925 it was #138. The other Mack in 1925 was a short wheel base and appears to have had a water tank.

**This 1925 photo from the files of the Circus World Museum shows at least part of the Ringling-Barnum fleet. The two trucks between the Mack ACs are Pierce Arrows.**

A 1925 photo in the files of the Circus World Museum shows the above two Macks as well as two Pierce Arrow heavy duty trucks. It is believed that the Pierce trucks were purchased in 1925. A 1927 Pete Mardo photo shows three Pierce Arrow trucks parked with Macks. The third Pierce Arrow was a 1926 model and may have been bought that year. In 1926 the big show bought another Mack, another was purchased in 1927. Two of the Pierce Arrows were to remain in use on the show through the 1935 season, however the third one a 1925 model was shipped to the Sells-Floto show for the 1930 season. The Floto show used the truck through its final season of 1932. It may have been used on the 1934 Hagenbeck-Wallace show, but was for sure on the Hagenbeck-Wallace Forepaugh Sells Circus in 1935.

The two Pierce Arrows remaining on the Ringling-Barnum show were #132 and #134.

A most informative letter from the files of the Circus World Museum provides detailed information on trucks used by the big show during the 1935 season. The Ringling Barnum trucks were licensed in the state of Indiana.

On February 29, 1936 Herbert H. Sicks, on HWFS letterpaper wrote from Peru to Carl T. Hathaway in Sarasota enclosing the applications for the Indiana license plates for trucks bearing RBBB titles. He enclosed a list of the information needed to fill out the

**This photo shows #128 on the Ringling-Barnum show in the early 1930s. One of the Pierce Arrows is at the right. Pneumatic tires had replaced the hard rubber on all of the big show trucks by the 1935 season. Joe Fleming Photo.**







This photo of a Sparks AC was taken by Herbert Sicks in 1931, the final season of the show.

applications. The information will be listed as each truck is covered below.

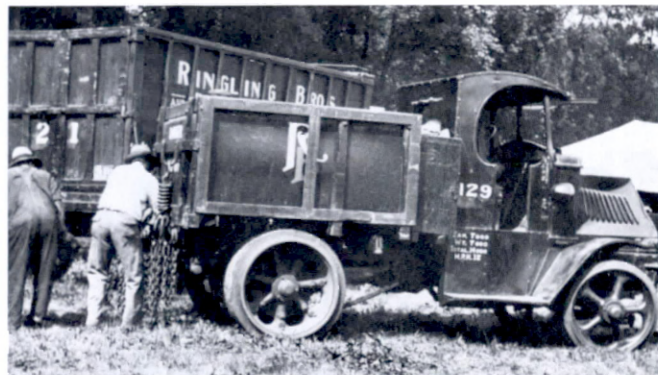
The first loading list available of the Ringling-Barnum show is one for the 1932 season. From that year through the final year of the show on rails in 1956 all Macks used by the big show have been identified. Each truck history will be listed.

**No. 128**—This was a 1929 model, and carried a box van through the 1934 season. In 1935 a steel water tank replaced the wood paneled box. An earlier photo trust lists the number as 21. The truck remained in use on the show through the 1948 season. It became #128 in 1945.

**No. 129**—This Mack had come from the Sparks show and had been used during the final season of 1931. It carried a water tank and pump. From 1932 until 1944 this was truck #129, in 1945 it became #239 and was used through the 1946 season.

At this point there is an inconsistency that cannot be explained. The Sparks show purchased two Mack AC-4s in 1925. They would have been 1924 or 1925 models. Yet the 1936 Peru letter regarding license plates lists #129 as a 1927 model. It is very doubtful that Sparks would have purchased different trucks

In 1932 John Ringling personally selected this crane unit Mack AC, it was the last AC to remain in use on the show during the 1952 season. Following 30 years service it was sold to the Royal American Shows where it was used for a couple of additional years. This is a 1936 photo.



The Sparks AC is shown on Ringling-Barnum in 1932. This truck remained in use on RBBB through the 1946 season. Charles Kitto Photo.

in 1927, as the 1925 units would have been barely broken in. On the other hand as the reader can compare the two photos this is definitely the same truck on both shows.

**No. 132**—During the period from 1932 through 1935 this number appeared on a 1925 Pierce Arrow truck. It carried a box van very similar to the one on #128. During the winter of 1935-36 a used Mack AC was purchased and the box was transferred from the Pierce Arrow to this truck and it was given the #132. The model year of this truck is not known. It was used through the 1948 season. Became 232 in 1945.

**No. 133**—This was a 1926 model and carried a steel water tank. It was retired after the 1951 season having served the show for 25 years. This Mack was the next to last AC used by the show.

**No. 134**—During the 1932-35 period this number was used on a 1926 Pierce Arrow truck. It carried a steel water tank. The truck was retired following the 1935 season and it was replaced by a second used Mack AC that was purchased at the same time as #132. A closed box van was placed on this Mack for the 1936 season. In 1946 a stake driver was mounted in place of the box. The truck was used through the 1947 season. Became 234 in 1945.

**No. 135**—This is perhaps the most famous Mack AC to have been owned by RBBB. It was a 1932 model and was purchased personally by John Ringling who saw it at a New York auto and truck show. Mack had built the truck as a demonstrator with a heavy duty crane mounted on an "I" beam. In a 1952 interview with Tom Parkinson in the *Billboard* David Blanchfield, RBBB truck superintendent, tells of the purchase by Ringling and his continued personal interest in the truck. The truck

remained in use on the show through the 1952 season, it was the only AC left on the show that year.

**No. 136**—This truck is a 1932 model and was purchased at the same time as #135. It carried a long two level box body that extended beyond the rear wheels, making it look like a longer wheel base than the others. This body appears to have been transferred from a Mack AC used in the 1920s. In the 1940s the body was remodeled and the higher portion was total enclosed with doors on each side. By 1950 its last year on the show, a new steel covered body had been placed on this truck. In 1945 it became #236 and was sold to Royal American in 1953 and it was used on that carnival through at least the 1959 season.

**No. 137**—This was a 1925 model and was equipped with a steel water tank with rounded corners on the top, the standard design of the steel water tanks on the Ringling-Barnum show. This one had a locker mounted cross ways at the front top of the tank. The truck became #237 in 1945 and was used through the 1946 season. This Mack remained in the new Venice, Fla. winter quarters as late as February 1962.

**No. 125**—This truck had been purchased by the Al G. Barnes Circus in 1927 and it assumed

Following the retirement of the two Pierce Arrows in 1935 two used Mack ACs were purchased to replace them, the P-A numbers 132 and 134 were assigned to these trucks. This 1936 photo shows the two trucks. Jim McRoberts Photo.







that it was a 1927 model. It had been the #1 Mack on the Barnes show in 1938. This truck as well as the other two Barnes Macks came into Sarasota at the end of the 1938 season. All three of the Barnes trucks were added to the Ringling-Barnum fleet for the 1939 season, after the baggage horses were discontinued. It had a wood water tank with a small tool box on the left side of the front top of the tank. In 1945 it became #225 and was used through the 1946 season.

**No. 130**—This truck was purchased by the Barnes-Sells-Floto Circus during the 1937 season. The model year is not known. It was #3 on the Barnes show. It carried a wood water tank with two wood railing bars mounted on each side of the top of the tank. In 1945 it became #230 and a different shorter steel water tank replaced the old tank. A wood box compartment was mounted in back of the cab between the tank. The truck was used through the 1949 season.

**No. 138**—The Barnes show purchased this Mack new in 1929 and was either a 1928 or 1929 model. It was equipped with the standard Barnes wood water tank and had a heavy duty pump, as did the #125 and #130. Coming to the big show in 1939 it was soon remodeled with wood sides that extended about two feet high on each side of the top of the tank. It became #238 in 1945 and by that time a standard steel RBBB water tank had replaced the original Barnes tank, a crum box was mounted on this one as on #127. In 1946 this truck was renumbered #231 and it was used through the 1950 season.

**This model CJ #250 was originally outfitted as a boom crane for unloading canvas in 1935. In the early 1940s this van body was placed on the truck. Jim McRoberts Collection.**



**This 1935 photo taken by Charles Kitto shows left to right AC #133, CJ #250, CJ #251, AC #135, CJ #252, AC #128, Pierce Arrow #132 and Pierce Arrow #134. This is proof that the Pierce Arrows remained on the show through the 1935 season.**

In 1935 the Greatest Show On Earth purchased its first non AC Mack trucks. These were new 1935 model CJ 12 ton capacity long wheel base units. They were cab over engine design, and were equipped with dual axles in the rear.

**No. 250**—This truck carried a heavy duty derrick boom equipped with spot lights that was used to unload canvas bundles from the new canvas trucks. Storage cabinets were mounted over the rear wheels on each side. In the early 1940s the boom and derrick were removed and a steel van closed box body was placed on #250. It was used through at least the 1947 season.

**No. 251**—This truck carried the big top canvas and was around 29 feet in length. The body was typical Yeske design and looked much like the old canvas wagons. Some suggestion has been made that the old canvas wagon bodies were mounted on the new trucks in 1935, however this was not the case. The old wagons were not in good condition and were retired. New bodies were built for this truck as well as its twin #252. This truck was used through the 1948 season.

**No. 252**—This truck was identical to #251. It was also used through the 1948 season.

**No. 253**—The White Motor Co. had long looked upon the circus as a user of its trucks. The 1935 purchase of the three model CJ long wheel base Mack trucks by Ringling-Barnum fired White up more than ever and a concerted sales effort was made to do business with the big show. They were successful in selling one

White truck to the show in 1937. White truck #253 was a cab over engine design and looked much like the Chevrolet canvas trucks that were to appear on the Hagenbeck-Wallace show that same season.

The White was a six wheeler and carried a body of the same construction as #251 and #252 using all wood construction except for steel channels at the floor on each side. This body remained on the White for about four years, when a new body was built with steel vertical channel braces, as opposed to the wood braces on the earlier body. It is thought that the new body was first used in 1940.

The show was not pleased with performance of the White and no more trucks of that make were purchased. The truck was used through the 1946 season.

In 1947 the Ringling show purchased its first Model LJ Mack trucks. One was a six wheeler long wheel base that replaced the #253 White. The body from the White was placed on the new LJ, as was the menagerie canvas truck number 253. In addition two short wheel base LJ were added each a new steel water tank. The new trucks were given #238 or 239.

This short wheel base unit carried a new water tank. Since the wheel base was longer than the ACs due to the transmission requirements, a locker compartment, for crum boxes was placed between the tank and the cab. A spare tire was mounted on top of the tank.

In 1949 the 1935 Mack CJ big top canvas trucks were retired. These interesting enough later turned up in Louisville, Ky., being used

**The 1935 CJ canvas trucks were retired in 1948 and were replaced by LJs. One of these #251 is shown here in a 1950 photo. Author's Collection.**







In 1949 this Mack model FT truck was added to the big show. The chain drive can be seen in the photo. This is a 1956 photo. Author's Collection.

by a ready mix concrete company, according to Bill Rhodes, a resident of that city.

Two additional long wheel base six wheelers were purchased and new steel bodies were built to carry the big top canvas. These were given the old big top canvas numbers 251 and 252. In the early 1950s an extension was placed on the body extending out over the cab of #253 and perhaps #251 as well. These trucks remained in use through the final season under canvas of 1956 and were also used on the ball park show in 1957 and 1958.

A fourth Mack #237 was purchased in 1949, and it was the only model FT Mack ever used by the show. The FT was chain driven with a gasoline engine. A steel water tank from an old AC was mounted on this truck with a larger locker compartment between the tank and the cab. It too had a spare tire mounted on the top of the tank. It is difficult to understand why the show would have purchased the odd model FT. Perhaps it was offered to them at a special price due to being gasoline chain driven. All other trucks on the show by then had been converted to diesel or purchased new with Cummings diesel engines.

In 1950 another LJ short wheel base Mack was placed on the show. It was given #234. This truck carried a water tank and locker and spare tire and looked much like #239. It like the other LJs was used through the 1956 season.

In 1952 a Mack LJ #233 came on the show, with water tank, locker and spare tire it looked much like #238. It also remained in use until 1956.

This photo of #238, one of the first LJs to be bought by the show in 1947 is typical of the LJ water trucks used by the show. Don Smith Photo.



In 1953 this LJ was added to the show. It was the next to last new truck to be purchased. Albert Conover Collection.

were used on the carnival for a couple of seasons. Two of them gave out after a couple of years, two were on the show as late as 1959. Royal donated one truck to the Circus World Museum and two to the Ringling Museum of the Circus. The Circus World Museum will use its RBBB/RAS truck in the parade in Baraboo this July 5. The two Ringling Museum trucks are in Jacksonville, Fla., being rebuilt by Tommie White. The Ringling Museum also owns a third Mack AC that came directly from the Sarasota winter quarters while it was being cleaned out.

Over the years perhaps no more than a total of thirty Mack AC trucks were used by various circuses, but it was a showcase for Mack International Motor Co. During the years from 1918 through 1958 Mack trucks became the standard of the circus industry in America, they piled up thousands of miles and years of service, they were truly the powerhouse behind the circus.

Special thanks for extensive help in the preparation of this article goes to Marv Kreiger, Bill Rhodes, Dan Draper, Al Conover, Bob Parkinson, Dyer Reynolds, Howard Tibbals, Joe Rettinger, Ed Lester, Don Carson, Gordon Potter, Jim McRoberts, Harold Dunn, Joe Bradbury, Tom Parkinson, John Corson, and specially to Gordon Carver for the vast amount of information he has published in his question and answer column in the *Little Circus Wagon*.

The last new truck purchased by the Greatest Show On Earth was this Mack model B-63. It carried the menagerie canvas in 1955 and 1956. In 1957 when this photo was taken it was on the truck show. Its last year of use was 1958 when the body was removed and as a flatbed it carried rubber mats. Author's Collection.





## THE FRED BUCHANAN RAILROAD CIRCUSES 1923-31

# Robbins Bros. Circus

### Part II — The 1924 Season

by Joseph T. Bradbury

The early winter months of 1924 found Fred Buchanan's World Bros. in quarters at William P. Hall's place in Lancaster, Missouri. As noted in the previous installment it has not been determined why Buchanan wintered in Lancaster rather than at his own quarters in Granger, Iowa where World Bros. had been framed the previous winter. The late Ben J. Kubly who was with the show in 1923 did not know the reason for the switch in quarters but presumed Buchanan felt that Hall's shops were better equipped to re-work the equipment over the winter. The show had been rather hastily put together and no doubt the equipment needed to be upgraded and extensively repaired.

There had been no hint whatsoever that a change of title would be forthcoming. So far as the circus world knew Buchanan would continue with the World Bros. title and all of the information about the show in the trade publications during the early weeks of 1924 used that name.

The Jan. 12, 1924 *Billboard* advised that Earl H. Sennott, general superintendent, and Joe Lloyd, supt. of baggage stock, would again be with World Bros. in their respective capacities in 1924. A week later the publication reported that Ed L. Brannon, who had been associated with Gentry Bros.-James Patterson Circus in 1923, would serve as general agent and traffic manager for World Bros. during the coming season.

Evidently a number of key staffers who would go with Buchanan in 1924 still maintained their homes in Granger for at least several weeks into the year as evidenced by the addresses given in the following advertisement that appeared in the Jan. 26, 1924 *Billboard*.

"WORLD BROS. CIRCUS WANTS. People in all branches of circus business. Want one more Single Iron Jaw artist. Also Freak and Novelty Acts for Sideshow.

Buglers, Sharpshooters, and Wrestlers for Concert. Address James Morse, Granger, Iowa.

Big Show Band—All mail to O.A. Gilson, Lakeland, Fla.

Clowns—address Kenneth Waite, Coates House, Kansas City, Mo.

Advance Department. Contractor, Press Agent—address E.L. Brannon, General Agent, Parsons, Kan.

Billposters, Lithographers, Car Cook, and others in billing department, address Frank R. Ballenger, Adv. Mgr., London, O.

Canvasmen, Seat men, address E. Hone, boss canvasman, 330 East 24th St., Chicago, Ill.

Trainmen, address Charles Nelson, Granger, Ia.

Drivers, address Joe Lloyd, Granger, Ia.

All others in working departments, address Earl Sennott, supt., Granger, Ia.

Farm paper and photo privileges open. All others address World Bros. Circus, Lancaster, Mo."

Only two very short notices about the show appeared in the trade publications during February. The Feb. 2, 1924 *Billboard* said that J. (Doc) Barker, master magician, who was with the World Bros. sideshow in 1923 would again be with that organization. Two weeks later the publication noted that Harry Bernhardt, ticket taker, had signed with World Bros. He had been with Buchanan for 19 years.

The March 7, 1924 *Billboard* carried this advertisement.

"WORLD BROS. CIRCUS. Want for Side Show. Entertaining Freak that is strong enough to feature. Midget, Fat Girl, Tattooed Man, Glass Blower with own fires or anything new and novel. Enclose recent photo and state all details. W.R. Tumber, Side Show Manager, Chicago, Ill."

Other than the few short notices and advertisements mentioned here there had appeared nothing of substance concerning Buchanan's plans for the coming season, nor had there been any report of winterquarters activities in Lancaster. However, much had been taking place behind the scenes and a very short news item plus an advertisement in the March 22, 1924 *Billboard* was the first public notice that a major development concerning Fred Buchanan's show had taken place. The news item said that Milton A. Robbins advises that he will be connected with Fred Buchanan's show in an official capacity. Mrs. Robbins and daughter, Maxine, will travel with him. The news item itself did not mention a change of title in Buchanan's show but the advertisement told the story. It read as follows.

"ROBBINS BROS. BIG 4 RING CIRCUS. Wanted

People in all branches of circus business, acts for big show, iron jaw performers, acrobats, menage riders, animal trainers all kinds. Arab act, wire, and aerial acts. Al Wilson, write.

Side Show. Freaks and novelty acts, Hawaiian dancers and musicians.

4-6-8 horse drivers. Address Joe Lloyd, Lancaster, Mo.

Polers, chalkers, and trainmen, Address Charles (Swede) Nelson, Lancaster, Mo.

Cooks and Waiters. Address Ed Hirner, Lancaster, Mo.

Properties. Address G. Steinhouser, Lancaster, Mo.

Electricians. Address Wallie Champion, Lancaster, Mo.

Porters. Address Joe Kelly, Lancaster, Mo.

All others. Address Earl Sennott, Supt., Lancaster, Mo.

Show opens, Lancaster, Mo., Saturday, April 26.

For Sale: Two male lions, Address James Morse, Lancaster, Mo.

Robbins Bros. Circus, Lancaster, Mo."

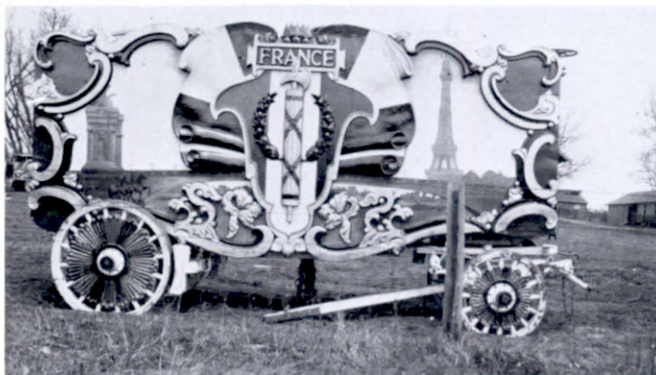
Milton A. Robbins was the son of the late Frank A. Robbins, a well known showman who had owned circuses off and on for many years. The last version of a Frank A. Robbins circus had toured from 1905 through the 1915 season. The title was still very popular in the east, in New England and the Middle Atlantic states especially. What arrangements were made with the Robbins family for use of the title by Buchanan is not known to the author, however there was probably a modest fee involved and it would seem an agreement was made in which Milt Robbins would take over the sideshow. W.R. Tumber had already lined up the sideshow attractions for the season and he was in charge at the start but left after two weeks and was replaced by Robbins. Robbins then held the position of sideshow manager throughout the life of the show.

Official title of Buchanan's circus in 1924 was Robbins Bros. Big 4 Ring Wild Animal Circus combined with Ponca Bill's Wild West.

Photo No. 1—Robbins Bros. advertising car, season of 1924. Circus World Museum (Baraboo, Wis.) Photo.







**Photo No. 2—France tableau at Robbins Bros. quarters, Granger, Iowa, April 1925. Photo by Ben J. Kubly.**

By late March news of the show's activities in quarters began coming with greater frequency. It was announced that Dan Hoffman had been hired to do local contracting for the show during the coming season and reports were published that the season would open with a big rehearsal performance in Lancaster on April 26. The March 29, 1924 *Billboard* had this item.

"H.L. Brown writes that troupers are arriving daily at the quarters in Lancaster, Mo. and work is going on a plenty. He says they have 70 head of fine baggage stock and parade will be headed with a 10 horse team on the bandwagon driven by 'Baldy' Brown of Sells-Floto fame". (Author's note: The number of 70 is too many baggage stock for the number of cars available to transport them. Forty would be a more realistic number.)

The April 12, 1924 *Billboard* said that Robbins Bros. in Lancaster quarters was rapidly getting in shape for the opening later in the month. Joe Lloyd has the baggage stock in fine shape and has some of the best long-string men in the business. Charlie "The Swede" Nelson is busily engaged with a crew of men on the train and Fat Rowe is looking after the sideshow. Fat Lemon, the former trainmaster, will be with the show but in another capacity. Earnest "Runt" Sammons is in charge of the miniature horses and Blackie Roberts has the ring stock. Johnnie Mullen and his musical elephants will be one of the features of the show. Mr. Sennott (general superintendent) is turning out new tableau wagons which will make a big flash in the parade. An addition to the menagerie is three baby pumas.

Also appearing in this same issue was the official "Call" advertisement which read as follows.

"CALL, ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS. All people engaged for Robbins Bros. Circus report on the lot at Lancaster, Mo., Thursday, April 24. Show opens April 26."

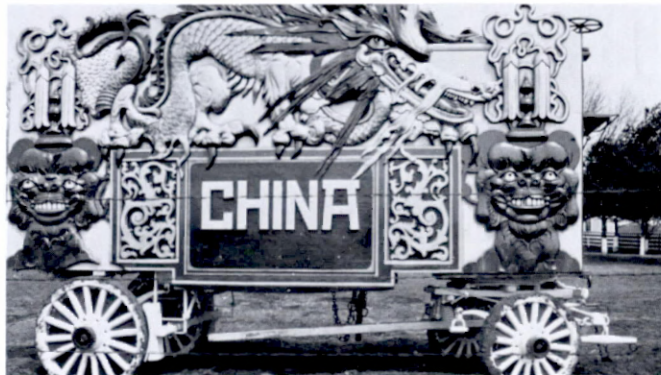
At the beginning of the 1924 season the Robbins Bros. train had the same number of cars and makeup as did World Bros. the previous year. It consisted of 1 advance, 3 stocks, 6 flats, and 5 coaches and travelled with 1 in advance and 14 cars back.

A serious lack of photographic coverage of the show, especially during the early part of the season, makes it difficult to record any information of a positive nature on the physical

equipment. It can be assumed that the parade wagons were the same as were carried the previous season with the former Forepaugh Lion Chariot bandwagon serving as the No. 1 bandwagon and both the sideshow and clown bands riding cages. The steam calliope was the former Young Buffalo wagon. Information available indicates that the big top was a 120 ft round with three 40 ft middles and remainder of the tentage the same as carried in 1923. Both a regular sideshow and a pit show were on the midway. The show began the season with five elephants, presumed to be the same that were carried the previous year. The herd consisted of COLUMBIA, ENA, TOMMY, DING DONG, AND BOO. Buchanan owned COLUMBIA and ENA while the latter three were leased from William P. Hall.

There was no official roster nor performance review of the show in the *Billboard* as was customary for most circuses, however the April 26, 1924 *Billboard* carried a very comprehensive article which gave considerable information on the show. The piece which was dated April 19 said the show was all set to open in Lancaster on the 26th as scheduled. Everything on the outfit will be brand new, including stakes, seats, cages, chariots, tableau wagons, two calliopes, gasoline driven stake driver, two electric lighting plants in specially built wagons, and canvas. The management is considering adding five cars to the train, making a total of 20. (Author's note: This was not done at the beginning but was accomplished later in the season.) Charles Nelson, trainmaster, will be assisted by a crew of ten men. Mr. Buchanan will have his private car on the show, also part of a baggage wagon with end doors will house his sedan and also two auto pickup cars. The big new truck will be loaded on the flats.

The article further said that Mr. Buchanan had contracted as one of the features, The Riding Davenport. The Aerial Lloyds and Millers will furnish one of the thrillers in a flying trapeze act. "Poodles" Law and the Mabbe Japs will present gymnastic and acrobatic numbers and a troupe of Arab tumblers will be one of the headliners. Many wild animal acts will be features, including Capt. Lewis Furtell and his group of male African lions, together with leopards, tigers, bears, pumas, and camels. Capt. John Tiebor will present his trained sea lions, featuring Nemo, the talking seal. Capt. Ashcraft has a polar bear act and Major Joe Metcalf the Robbins Bros. elephants. Johnnie Mullen presents his musical elephants. Others with the



**Photo No. 3—China tableau at Robbins Bros. quarters, Granger, Iowa, April 1925. Photo by Ben J. Kubly.**

show will be Kenneth Waite, producing clown, and his merry jesters; Ponca Bill and his congress of rough riders, plus a band of real Sioux Indians, and Gust Karras, Greek wrestler.

Other notes in the article mentioned that William R. Tumber, sideshow manager, had signed an excellent group of attractions, including the Palakiko troupe of Hawaiian singers, dancers, and instrumentalists; Agawa, African pygmy and Prof. Joe Riggins and his 12 piece band and minstrels. Frank J. Baker will be inside man and lecturer. Fred (Peggy) Poole of Kansas City will have the No. 2 kid or pit show, featuring Juanita the Girl from Mexico. O.A. Gilson, big show bandmaster, has 20 musicians. E (Big Top) Howe will be boss canvasser; Joe Lloyd, boss hostler; Blackie Roberts in charge of ring stock; Capt. Lewis Furtell in charge of the menagerie; James Morse, secretary and office manager. Milton (Boots) Robbins, son of the late Frank A. Robbins, will be connected with the show in an official capacity. Ed L. Brannon, general agent, has been busy mapping out a route and contracting the railroads and Dan Hoffman has been on the job as local contractor. The advance car in charge of Frank R. Ballenger with a crew of 25 billposters, lithographers, and bannermen, left winterquarters on April 12. Newspaper men will find the writer on the front door. F. Robert Saul, press agent.

Another note in the same issue said that Al Langdon, who had the elephants on World Bros. in 1923, will not be under the white tops this season but will play fairs under the William P. Hall banner.

There were a number of elephant trainers with Robbins Bros. during the 1924 season. It appears Joe Metcalf was on the show at the start of the season, no doubt primarily in charge of the three elephants leased from Hall. No further mention is made of Johnnie Mullen and his musical elephants. Possibly he was an additional elephant man hired by Buchanan to look after his own elephants, Columbia and Ena, and one or more of them had been worked into some sort of musical routine.

The reader is reminded that some of the *Billboard* reports such as the one just given must be taken with caution, especially when it tends to give the impression that Robbins Bros. in 1924 was practically all new. Certainly, considerable repair work would have been



done, plus no doubt there were some new seating, canvas, and other equipment. Buchanan had made money in 1923 which would be available for this. However, under no stretch of reason would the situation have been as glowing as the writer of this article would lead one to believe. The mention of two calliopes is interesting. It is entirely possible that the former Yankee Robinson air calliope which Buchanan "held out" of the sale of that show in the fall of 1920 was put into use at the beginning of the 1924 season, but more probably it came to the show later in the season when the train was enlarged and other wagons were added. At that time it is mentioned several times that the show had just acquired a new air calliope. In any event this air calliope was definitely on the show before the end of the 1924 season. Again, it must be emphasized that the lack of photos makes it impossible to give much information of value about the equipment at the start of the season. The color scheme of the wagons and train likely did not change. It can be assumed that the new title of Robbins Bros. was placed on the rolling stock replacing the former World title.

The 1924 season was now at hand. Railroad circuses, flat car type, going out included Ringling-Barnum, Sells-Floto, Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson, Al G. Barnes, Sparks, Walter L. Main, Gentry-Patterson, Christy Bros., Golden Bros., and Robbins Bros. Tunnel or gilly type railers were Gollmar Bros. (Chester Monahan), Harris Bros. (Floyd and Howard King), and Cole Bros. (E.H. Jones). Overland shows, most of them moving with a combination of horse drawn wagons and motor trucks included Mighty Haag, C.L. Alderfers, R.L. Atterbury, Honest Bill, M.L. Clark, Seils-Sterling, Russell Bros., Campbell Bros. and Luckey Bill, Ketron Bros., Rose Killian, and Clark Bros. All of the flat car rail shows with the exception of Ringling-Barnum paraded at the start of the season. Al G. Barnes later abandoned its parade in July. Many of the overland shows also presented the daily march.

Both the political and economic situation in the country at the beginning of the 1924 circus season were rather quiet and stable. Calvin (Silent Cal) Coolidge was in the White House serving out the term of former President

Harding who had died in 1923 and virtually no ripples were coming out of Washington. The labor turbulence of the early 1920's had quieted down and the country was entering the generally prosperous years of the mid 1920's, which years later would be looked on with fondness by circus men as some of the best of the "good old days". Most shows expected a good season and few would be disappointed. The flat car shows with the exception of Golden Bros. would experience a tranquil and profitable season. Golden Bros. which began the season with Mike Golden as owner soon ran into difficulties. The show was later sold to John Pluto who resumed the route but he didn't last long and he sold it to George W. Christy in September who soon developed the circus into a paying proposition during the final weeks of the season. The Golden Bros. situation is mentioned here because during the season many former troupers of that show joined Buchanan's Robbins Bros.

Following the Robbins opening in Lancaster the show moved on a Sunday run to Kirksville, Mo. where performances were given on Monday, April 28. A final stand in Missouri came at Memphis the next day, then the show headed into Iowa at Keokuk on April 30. May Day saw the show at Ft. Madison, followed by Mt. Pleasant on May 2, which turned out to be an exceedingly rough stand with the first of two major blowdowns experienced in 1924 coming about six in the evening. The weather so far in the season had been on the nasty side somewhat but in Mt. Pleasant it became downright mean. There was rain, hail, and finally a windstorm which felled all of the tents, damaging the canvas to the extent that practically an entire set of new tops had to be ordered. Four performers were injured but none seriously and three workmen sustained minor injuries. The blowdown occurred after the matinee and the damage was so severe no night performance could be given. The wreckage was finally cleared and the train was loaded and on its way to Fairfield the next day at 10 a.m. One performance was given in Fairfield with only the big top sidewall erected. The following day was a Sunday off in Burlington, Iowa so there was ample time for the big top to be patched up enough so it could be used for performances on Monday, May 5. The show continued in Iowa using the repaired big top playing a date at Washington, May 6, then jumped over into Illinois for a single stand in East Moline, after which it returned to Iowa at Tipton. At

DeWitt, Iowa, May 9, it was obvious the beat-up big top could not last much longer so Buchanan placed an order with Baker-Lockwood for a new 120 ft round with three 40's tent to be delivered as soon as possible.

First news of the season had come in early May in the trade publications when Ed L. Brannon, general agent, was quoted that business so far for the show had been very nice although weather conditions had been somewhat unpleasant.

The May 24, 1924 *Billboard* which told about the Mt. Pleasant blowdown also mentioned a number of other recent happenings on the show. It was noted Robbins Bros. was moving well with the train arriving at each stand by 5 a.m. and so far no parades had been missed. In the evenings the train had been loaded by 11:30 p.m. due mainly to the efforts of Fat Black, boss canvasman, (indicating a change had been made here), Joe Lloyd, boss hostler, and Charles Nelson, trainmaster. The show encountered the worst business of the season so far at Washington, Iowa, May 6. Other notes said that the Ben Shirgy troupe of Arabian tumblers was making a big hit at every stand. William R. Tumber, sideshow manager, closed at DeWitt, May 9 (less than two weeks after the season opened) and left for his home in Chicago. Milton Robbins became the new sideshow manager. Business was big in East Moline, Ill. New personnel included Fat Cronin who joined Robbins in Mt. Pleasant (he had been with Sells-Floto at its Chicago stand) and Bert Rickman, formerly with Al G. Barnes and Golden Bros. circuses who joined at Tipton. Rickman was given complete charge of the big show performance and was assisted by Bernie Griggs. (Author's note: Name of the person in charge of the performance prior to arrival of Bert Rickman had not been announced.)

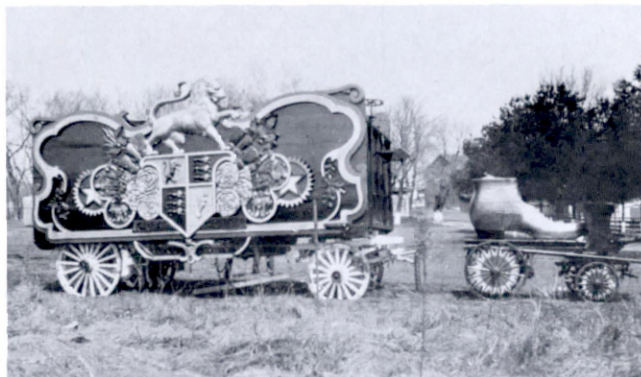
For the second time in the young season the show crossed over into Illinois for a single date, at Morrison, May 10, where business was fair. That day, Freidel Artego, aerialist, closed on account of illness in his family and Princess Tina Rose, wardrobe mistress, also left the show.

A Sunday run took the show back into Iowa where performances were scheduled at Maquoketa on May 12. As the train crew was

**Photo No. 4—Africa tableau at Robbins Bros. quarters, Granger, Iowa, April 1925. This one was often erroneously called "India". Photo by Ben J. Kubly.**



**Photo No. 5—Great Britain tableau and small shoe float at Robbins Bros. quarters, Granger, Iowa, April 1925. Photo by Ben J. Kubly.**





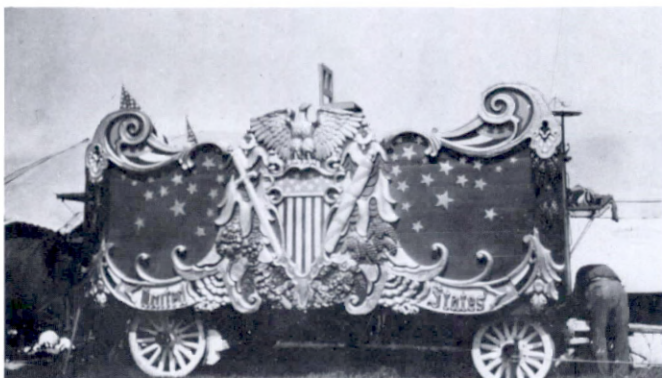
switching the show's cars in the rail yards at Maquoketa on Sunday morning one flat car was derailed. The engineer put on the air too quickly and the consequent derailment caused the cookhouse wagon and the steam calliope to be thrown off the flat. Some damage was done but the trade publications said that everything was repaired in a few days. The reader is asked to pay special attention to this derailment and damage to the steam calliope because in all probability the sides to the wagon were damaged to the extent that a different wagon had to later be put into use to house the instrument. In 1925 we will learn that Robbins Bros. steam calliope was mounted in a new wagon, one using the floor, gears, and wheels of the former Young Buffalo wagon which had been on Buchanan's show in 1923 and 1924 but the sides were that of the Forepaugh Lion chariot. Details on this transformation will be given in the next installment.

Also at Maquoketa Bert Rickman left for Chicago to pick up some new parade wardrobe for the show.

A total of 13 continuous stands came in the current tour of Iowa and the May 31, 1924 *Billboard* in a very candid article said that Robbins Bros. had encountered some poor business in the state. It was pointed out that small towns in Iowa were in bad shape financially with merchants and bankers complaining there was no money in circulation due to lack of ample employment among the working class. The writer speculated that if business does not soon pick up the show will head for Pennsylvania, New York, and New England. (Author's note: No doubt Buchanan seriously contemplated routing his show into territory the former Frank A. Robbins Circus played but strangely enough he never did until 1931, the last season for his Robbins Bros. circus.) Other notes said that Anamosa, May 13, was very bad weatherwise as it rained, hailed, and even snowed all day. Attendance was small. It rained again the following day at Tama where business was fair in the afternoon and poor at night. Fortunately the show got its first taste of real summerlike weather in Ames, May 15. Mrs. Buchanan and daughter, Mary Jane, visited the show in Jefferson on the 16th. A final notation said that Paul Fisher's hamburger stand has a new red and white tent.

Circus Cy writing in Under The Marquee

**Photo No. 6—United States tableau on Robbins Bros. lot about 1931. Joe Bradbury (Melvin) Collection.**



column in the same issue advised that Ed Brannon, Robbins' general agent, was in Winnipeg, Canada last week, and Cy wondered if a Canadian tour is in the works for "Buch".

A *Billboard* correspondent caught up with Robbins Bros. in Ft. Dodge, Iowa, May 21, and reported the show played to two good houses. Streets were crowded for the parade as schools were dismissed for it. Kenneth White and his joeys went over big. Hank Linton and his cowboys were fine and a group of 3 performing elephants made a hit. The reporter opined the Davenporters have a fine riding act and concluded his piece by pointing out that the packed tents demonstrated Ft. Dodge natives were circus hungry.

The June 7, 1924 *Billboard* continued with coverage of the Robbins Bros. tour of Iowa. Golden Bros. had closed for reorganization and a number of that show's former personnel had recently joined Robbins. First came several musicians and while Robbins was at Audubon, May 19, Helen Kimbel signed on to do a menage act. Bert Wallace, who had been with both Walter L. Main and Golden Bros. earlier in the season joined the same day and will act as trainer of the Robbins menage stock and ponies. Weather conditions continued to be bad at many Iowa dates. In Denison, May 17, where the show was under auspices of the American Legion, a heavy rain storm hit following the parade but still there was a big afternoon crowd. However, attendance at night was poor on account of the cold rain. Business was very good at both performances at Iowa Falls, May 22. The article concluded by saying that Ft. Dodge was still the banner day of the season so far. Karl L. King, noted bandmaster, was the guest of O.A. Gilson, the Robbins band leader, in Ft. Dodge. King has arranged and written the music for the spectacular production which Mr. Buchanan will soon add to the big show program.

Two advertisements also appeared in this issue.

"WANTED FOR ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS. Kid Worker, wire Charles (Nigger Fat) Roberts. Second Cook and Waiters, wire Ed Hirner. Tintype and Farm Paper privileges open, wire C. Rightman. Robbins Bros. Circus, Windon, June 5th; St. James, 6th; Sleepy Eye, 9th, all Minnesota."

"ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS WANTS. Real Hawaiian Musicians and Dancers.

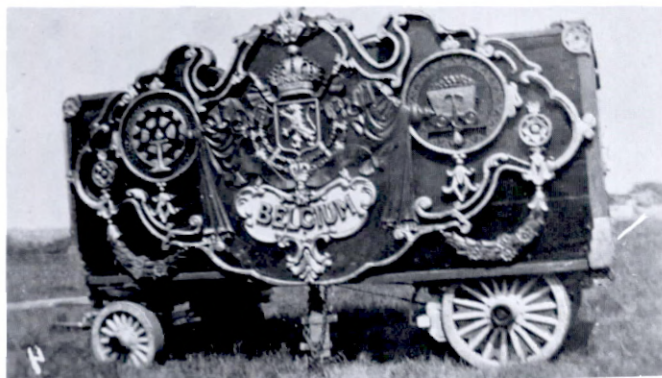
Side Show act to feature. Cornet for

Colored Band. Milt Robbins, Sideshow Manager as per route."

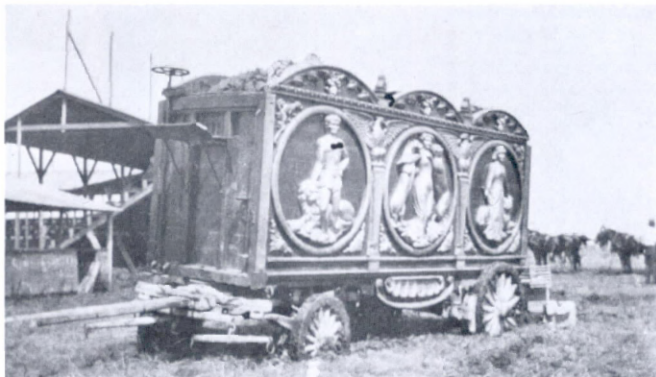
Following a stand at Cresco, Iowa, May 26, the show went into Minnesota to play Austin the next day but then returned to Iowa for Mason City, Sheldon, Emmetsburg, and Spencer. A return to Minnesota came June 2 at Worthington where Robbins played a rare two day engagement. Then followed five more stands in the state before a tour of South Dakota started on June 13.

The June 21, 1924 *Billboard* covered the show's route through this area and first noted Robbins Bros. was continuing to encounter inclement weather in Iowa and Minnesota. During the evening performance in Emmetsburg, Iowa, May 30, Lester Bogart, who plays the leading part in the "Hanging of the horse Thief" number in the wild west aftershow was kicked in the head by Boger Red's horse. The wound was dressed and Bogart was back in the act the next day in Spencer. The article said that poor business experienced in the area now being played was due largely to many bank failures. In Windon, Minn., June 5, where Robbins was the first circus to play in seven years, the weather was so cold that the troupers all brought out their overcoats but despite the raw day it was a good one businesswise. The report also said that Billie Wallace and the Robbins Bros. elephants are a big feature working under trainer Dutch Wallace. (Author's note: This was the first indication that Dutch Wallace was now in charge of the elephants.) The Riding Davenport featuring Bernie Griggs, riding comedian, is scoring big and another feature is Capt. Tiebor's seals. Capt. Lewis Furtell is breaking two new African male lions to use in his animal number with leopards, bears, and tigers. He is also presenting a big "Wallace fighting lion act". Ten new dancing girls were added to the ballet for the spec in Luverne, Minn., June 4. An English hunting number was added in Sheldon, Iowa. Hank Linton and Helen Kimball lead the display. The high jumping horse, Major Anthony, is ridden by Miss Kimball. Kenneth Waite, producing clown, has added another walkaround, "Mule Sweetie From Junesville," featuring Cliff Hays. Another team of dapple grays was purchased in Mason City, Iowa by boss hostler, Joe Lloyd, which will be used in parade on the bandwagon. This

**Photo No. 7—Belgium tableau on Robbins Bros. lot, season of 1931. Joe Bradbury Collection.**







**Photo No. 8—South America tableau on Robbins Bros. lot about 1928. Joe Bradbury Collection.**

makes five teams of grays on the chariot that leads the parade. Final notes on this very interesting report said that O.A. Gilson had 20 men in his band and that Earl Sennott, general supt., had made a hurried trip to Wagner, S.D. to purchase historical Indian relics and trophies which will be placed on exhibition by Robbins Bros. He also hired four Sioux Indians for the show.

Even though business still hadn't been too good so far in the 1924 season it was evident that Buchanan was upgrading the quality of his performance and show in general. By mid June business began to improve rapidly and would continue to grow as the season progressed.

Strangely enough the campaign against grift in the circus and carnival industry which was fostered by the *Billboard* a year ago died out. Grift itself did not vanish from the scene and although the larger circuses no longer carried it many of the medium and smaller railroad shows as well as some overland outfits still permitted it to flourish on their lots. Robbins Bros. still had it but there is no recorded incident in the trade publications where it created any undue heat in any of the show's stands. On the midway was an exotic "Girl from Mexico" pit show operated by a well known female impersonator in the circus world and ordinarily this kind of thing would invite a confrontation with the bluenoses of the small midwest communities Buchanan played but evidently he was able to use it with discretion or fix it with the local authorities so that it created no heat, at least none of a caliber to reach the pages of the trade publications.

Robbins Bros. moved into South Dakota, June 13, at Brookings for six stands. The next day at Huron, S.D. the show suffered its second blowdown of the season. Like the first one that hit at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa back on May 2 the blow came in the late afternoon following the matinee. No further details on the second blowdown were recorded by the trade publications but it is believed it was not as severe as the one at Mt. Pleasant. At Sisseton, S.D., June 19, more than 200 young men and women students of the U.S. Indian School were guests of the management at the afternoon performance.

The show returned to Minnesota to play Montevideo on June 20 but went back into South Dakota the next day at Milbank, after which came a Sunday run that took the train to Wahpeton, N.D. for performances on Monday, June 23. While in Wahpeton, Paul Weinger who had the balloon privileges on the show left to join the John Robinson Circus in Logansport, Ind. When Robbins played Wahpeton, just across the river in Breckenridge, Minn. the Lackman Exposition Shows (carnival) was beginning a week's engagement. Following the single date in North Dakota the show went again into Minnesota for a week with opening stand at Morris, June 24. At Princeton, Minn., June 27, Mary Rojas fell from the top of the big top, 40 ft. to the ground while doing her iron jaw number during the afternoon performance. She had just been pulled into position for her feature act and had started her famous "Flirting with Death" routine when the accident occurred. Her husband picked her up and to the surprise of everyone she was able to walk to the padroom. She suffered a fractured jaw, left knee, and two upper teeth were knocked out. She was expected to be out of the performance for two weeks.

**Photo No. 11—Dutch Wallace (William Wilhite), elephant trainer, with Tommy, Ding Dong, and Boo on Robbins Bros. lot, season of 1924. Fred D. Pfening Jr. Collection**



**Photo No. 10—Robbins Bros. air calliope in street parade, season of 1928.**

While in this general area, the *Billboard* reported that Ponca Bill's Wild West, the Robbins Bros. aftershow, purchased two new bucking horses which are ridden Texas Jack and Mack Runnels. It was also reported that Hank Linton, roper and trick rider, is the sensation of the wild west concert.

Following the stand at Pipestone, Minn., June 30 the show moved back into South Dakota for performances at Madison, July 1. Additional stands in the state then came at Lake Preston, Miller, Pierre, and Gettysburg. Going northward into North Dakota Robbins began a string of 8 dates beginning with Oakes, July 7 and concluding with Edgely on the 15th.

At some stand in the general area played by Robbins Bros. over the past few weeks the show was enlarged by 5 cars, giving the train a total of 20. Business had been good of late and especially was it heavy in the dates played in northern Minnesota. The July 12, 1924 *Billboard* gives some most important details on the enlargement of the show. The article mentioned that Buchanan had purchased from Doc Allman of Kansas City 3 new double-length all steel flat cars. A fine new Pullman sleeper came from Mose Zimmerman, general manager of the Barrett and Zimmerman Co. of Minneapolis, Minn. and a stock car loaded with "a fine bunch of big draft dappled gray horses" was purchased from William P. Hall of



Lancaster, Mo. The article said that Mose Zimmerman had visited Buchanan when Robbins Bros. played Princeton, Minn., June 27, and in all probability this was the stand where the enlargement occurred although the *Billboard* didn't specifically say this. In any event with the addition of 3 flats, 1 stock, and 1 sleeper, the Robbins train make up was now 1 advance, 4 stocks, 9 flats, and 6 sleepers making a total of 20 cars. Unfortunately we have no photos to tell us if the 3 flats from Doc Allman were indeed all steel, 72 ft. cars as the article mentions. However, Buchanan, already had one Mt. Vernon built steel flat and some years later is known to have had at least 5 of the Mt. Vernon cars, so there is a strong possibility the 3 coming from Allman were Mt. Vernon built flats.

New wagons to be loaded on the additional flat car space according to the *Billboard* article were 5 new dens of wild animals, 2 new seat plank wagons, a new air calliope wagon, and three beautiful tableau wagons purchased from Robert F. Schiller of Marion, Ohio. No further details are given on the source of the cages, plank wagons, or air calliope, but it is well known that the air calliope was the former Yankee Robinson wagon which Buchanan had "held out" when he sold the Yank show in the fall of 1920. It likely had been in storage at Buchanan's farm in Granger, Iowa and shipped to join the show enroute.

The addition of the three tableau wagons from Schiller is most significant. These were the first of a total of eight tableau wagons that Buchanan would acquire from Schiller and were part of the group of famous tableau sides built by the Bode Wagon Works of Cincinnati for the United States Circus Corporation owned by Frank P. Spellman. The story of these tableaux is one of the most fascinating in circus annals and a brief review of it is appropriate. During the fall of 1916 and early 1917 Bode designed and built 16 tableau sides, each representing a different continent or nation, for Frank Spellman's motorized show. Tradition has it that a 17th, representing Germany, was begun but never completed due to the United States' entry into World War I in April 1917. These tableau sides were then mounted on Kelly-Springfield motor trucks and the beautiful carvings aided by appropriate painted art work indeed made a stirring sight. The first world war delayed Spellman's opening and it wasn't until Aug. 16, 1919 that the show using title of America's Motorized Circus opened in Columbus, Ohio. Unfortunately the show folded only five days later on August 21. Kelly-Springfield repossessed all of the trucks and returned them to its plant where the tableau sides were removed and the trucks sold elsewhere. In 1922 Robert F. Schiller purchased 15 of these tableau sides from Kelly-Springfield and moved them to his place in Marion, Ohio. Upon the order of Fred Buchanan in 1924 Schiller mounted 8 of these sides on wagons he had built which were suitable for railroad show use and delivered them to Robbins Bros. Circus while enroute. Some of the other tableau sides were sold to carnivals and used for show front decorations. The fascinating story of the United States Motorized Circus and the famous set of Bode built tableau sides

**.100 Wild Animals Exhibited Free in Parade!**  
**TWO BIG SHOWS for ONE ADMISSION PRICE**

**ROBBINS BROS.**  
**BIG 4 RING**  
**WILD ANIMAL CIRCUS**  
**PONCA BILL'S WILD WEST**

INCLUDING  
**BUGER RED, HANK LINTON, OKLAHOMA DAN**  
**MONTANA JOE, PRAIRIE LILLY**  
**TEXAS BILL, DAN OFFAT**  
 and the world's greatest bucking horse riders, ropers and bull  
 dodgers, together with a band of Sioux Indians, presenting  
 a real Wild West

**4 Rings - 2 Stages - Steel Arena - Wild West - Horse Show**  
**BIGGEST WILD ANIMAL CIRCUS in the WORLD**

**30** Double Length Cars  
 Equals 60 Freight cars  
**500 PEOPLE**  
**300 HORSES**  
**600** Educated  
 Animals  
**10 Acres of TENTS**  
 Host of  
 Elephants and  
 Camels  
**100 WILD ANIMALS**  
 Exhibited in Parade  
**100 WAGONS**  
**2 Electric Light Plants**  
**50 FUNNY CLOWNS**

**ROBBINS BROS.**  
**PERFORMING ELEPHANTS**  
 ten in number.  
**PONCA BILL WILD WEST**  
 Buger Red, Hank Linton and 30  
 well known cowboys  
**AIRCRAFT**  
 and his ten African male  
 lions in a show-down act  
**TOM SMITH**  
 and his high jumping  
 Russian Wolf Hounds and  
 Horses

**AERIAL LLOYDS, MADDE JAPS, BOUNDING LAWANDE, KENNET WALET**  
**CHESTER SHERMAN and the ACROBATIC KENTS**

**10 - Performing Sea Lions - 10**  
 Performing African Lions, Tigers  
 Panthers and Pumas  
**HORSE BACK RIDING LEOPARD**  
**10-PERFORMING POLAR BEARS-10**

**Performing Zebras, Horses, Ponies**  
**Monkeys, Dogs, Cats, Birds**  
**BAND OF SIOUX INDIANS**  
**ATTACK ON THE COVERED WAGON**

**TWO BIG SHOWS for the ONE PRICE OF ADMISSION**  
 Will Positively Exhibit at 1924  
**KEOKUK WEDNESDAY**  
**APRIL 30th**  
 Endorsed by Keokuk Chamber of Commerce

Photo No. 17—Newspaper advertisement for Robbins Bros. stand 1924.

is told in my article in the Jan.-Feb. 1962 *Bandwagon*.

At least six of the tableau wagons coming from Schiller during the 1924 season are mentioned by name. It is not known with certainty when the other 2 arrived, however the late Bill Woodcock, Sr. once told me that all 8 had gotten to Buchanan and were on hand in winterquarters before the 1925 season began. In all probability Schiller shipped them to various stands along the 1924 route when they were completed. All were box type wagon fully capable of carrying a baggage load. They were approximately the same length, 16 to 18 ft., but did not have the same wheel arrangements. The 8 tableau wagons coming to Robbins Bros. were GREAT BRITAIN, PANAMA, BELGIUM, UNITED STATES, FRANCE, CHINA, SOUTH AMERICA, and AFRICA. Africa was later erroneously called India and often referred to as the Hippo wagon, so named for the carvings on its sides. A photo of each of these 8 wagons is printed with this article. All photos picture the wagons while they were on Buchanan's Robbins Bros. Circus but were taken during different seasons.

The July 12, 1924 *Billboard* article mentioned earlier gives the names of the initial three tableau wagons delivered to Robbins Bros. by Schiller as Great Britain, Panama, and Japan. Although there was indeed a Japan tableau, a photo of which appears in the Jan.-Feb. 1962 *Bandwagon* article referred to, this particular one never did get to Robbins Bros. The misnamed wagon by the author of the *Billboard* article was possibly South America, or maybe Belgium. The Belgium tableau definitely was used by Robbins in 1924, and a photo of it appears here. A final note in the *Billboard* story says that Earl Sennott had returned from a 5 day buying trip to Kansas City, Minneapolis, St. Paul, and St. Joseph, Mo. and Margaret Maxwell is proving to be a popular singer in the title roll of the "Cinderella in Jungleland" spec.

The latter half of July saw Robbins Bros. return to South Dakota at Redfield on the 16th and remain in the state through its date at Belle Fourche on the 23rd. A ten stand tour of Nebraska came next with initial date at Chadron on July 24. Final stand in Nebraska was at Howell on August 4 then the show moved into Iowa at Logan the next day with ten additional dates in the state to follow.

It was reported in the Aug. 2, 1924 *Billboard* that Ed L. Brannon, Robbins Bros. general agent, had been in Chicago and purchased a 70 ft sleeping car which was shipped immediately to the show. A number of reports were published in the trade publications that Buchanan had purchased some cars over and above the 20 cars following the show's recent enlargement. One story said that there were now 22 cars in the Robbins train, however this is highly questionable. It is entirely possible that some purchases were made to replace older cars and the train would continue with the same number. An advertisement appearing in the *Billboard* in late December 1924 in which Robbins Bros. offers four railway cars for sale indicates that Buchanan may have indeed purchased some replacement cars for the train and sold off the excess later in the year. Here again the absence of photographs makes it impossible to tell for sure if for a while in 1924 there were actually 22 cars in the train.

The following advertisement also appeared in this issue.

**"WANTED FOR ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS.** Second contracting agent who can handle three man brigade. Address Ed L. Brannon, general agent, Windsor Hotel, Chicago."

The Aug. 16, 1924 *Billboard* advised that Robbins Bros. had found good business on its recent route through Minnesota and both Dakotas. The sideshow under management of Milton Robbins and Peggy Poole's pit show also had done well of late. Bismark, N.D. played July 9 has been the banner stand so far in the season. An interesting time was had at Valentine, Neb., July 25. Indians from the Rosebud Reservation were holding their Pow Wow at the time. Business in Valentine was very big and 15 Indians were engaged by the show for the balance of the season. Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Myers from Chester Menahan's Gollmar Bros. Circus joined Robbins in Central City, Neb., July 29. The former is selling tickets in the annex and Mrs. Myers is doing a





Photo No. 12—Spencer Huntler, elephant trainer, with Columbia on Robbins Bros. lot, season of 1924. Woman in spec costume is not identified. Fred D. Pfening Jr. Collection.

sharp sheeting turn in the concert and riding menage in the big show. John Schultz in charge of animals in the menagerie (indicating a change had been made here) donated two badgers and a coyote to Jenner's Park Zoo when the show played Loup City, Neb., July 20. Gust Karras, wrestler in the aftershow, has been made manager of the privilege car since "Specks" left to play fairs and celebrations in the Dakotas. Final note said that four new tableau wagons which had been purchased by Mr. Buchanan were now on the show. (These of course would be those coming from Schiller.)

Final stand in Iowa for the season was at Villisca on August 16, then the show went into Missouri for a single date at Tarkio, and next it was a return to Nebraska at Auburn which was followed by four more dates in the Cornhusker state.

Robbins Bros. activities were now getting excellent coverage in the trade publications. The reports usually signed by F. Robert Saul, the show's press agent back with the circus, were most complete and appear to be accurate. In contrast to some show reports he would mention the bad as well as the good, but currently most of the news from the show was good. The Aug. 23, 1924 *Billboard* in an article headlined by "ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS CONTINUES TO DO BIG BUSINESS DESPITE BAD WEATHER AND OPPOSITION. New Acts and Wagons Arrive," said that notwithstanding the week of bad weather that has just passed, Robbins Bros. has done wonderful business. Although the show had a 120 mile jump from York, Neb. to Howells, Neb. on a Sunday run, August 3, and the train had to pass through two terminals of the C&NW Railroad it arrived at 7 a.m. and everything was set up on the lot by 8:15. The show had two capacity houses in York and in Howells at the Monday performances a fair sized audience attended. In Ida Grove, Ia., August 6, the show had a late arrival and the

lot grew worst from the heavy rains as the time for the night performance approached but still there was a fine house on hand to follow the capacity crowd in the afternoon. At Manning, Iowa, August 7, Charles (Fat) Roberts and his crew were forced to leave the big top on the ground until 10 a.m. so heavy was the rain. The wet stuff stopped at 2 p.m. but just as the matinee crowd arrived another big storm blew up. Still there was a fair house. It continued raining and attendance in the evening was also considered just fair. While enroute to Marshalltown, Iowa, August 8, there was such a severe rain, hail, and windstorm that the railroad crew was afraid to proceed until it let up some. Although it rained all night the show

was able to set up all right on the Marshalltown fairgrounds where two capacity houses turned out. There was opposition that day from the John T. Wortham Shows (carnival) which was playing nearby in Forest Park. In Grinnell, Ia., Aug. 9, Robbins Bros. had packed houses even after two larger circuses had recently played this territory. Grinnell had only recently been opened to circuses and tent shows after being closed to them for many years. In Logan, Ia., Aug. 5, while being pulled on the lot by the new tractor, one of the new dens which contained 3 lions toppled over a 97 ft embankment. It took four 4-horse teams, two elephants and 50 men to get it out of the ditch.

Other notes said that Bud Valiere, one of



The book you've been waiting for . . . . .

### "THE CIRCUS LIFE and ADVENTURES of ADAM BARDY"

. . . A thrilling adventurous story of how Adam's adventure started before the age of 10, when on a Saturday in 1915, the Buffalo Bill Wild West Circus was playing in his home town . . . Adam's first run away and now a thrilling life begins that leads to gypsy friends . . . then a truly adventurous circus life in the Roaring 20's . . . then a venture into prize fighting and now a true life among the gypsies begins.

. . . Out of the circus adventure see how Adam found his way, with a friend, into the Kentucky mountains and there he led the life of a moonshine mountaineer.

. . . Read about Adam's life as a big time bootlegger that began in the Roaring 20's and how his bootlegger operation was ended when a large group of State Police swooped down on his farm . . . Read about Adam's get-away and then a fugitive life with gypsy friends is started.

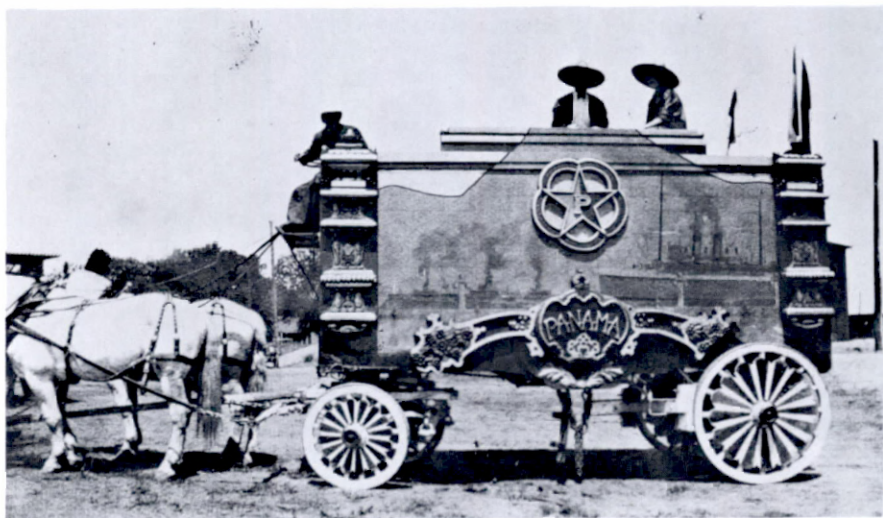
. . . Read about his venture of going into the daring fortune telling of reading a person's past, present and future . . . from one's photo alone.

. . . Read one of the most thrilling books of the true story of a modern day fortune teller . . . A collector's item.

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**Photo No. 9—Panama tableau wagon in Robbins Bros. parade, 1929, Pfening Collection.**

Kenneth Waite's joey was playing the air calliope, also that Mary Rojas, who was injured some weeks earlier, had returned to the program. Final items noted that Tracey Andrews, giant clown, is being featured in a new number called "The Sheik of Joyland." Robbins Bros. now has the largest tribe of Sioux Indians on any show—30 braves, 5 squaws, and 10 papposes.

The splendid Robbins coverage continued in the Aug. 30, 1924 *Billboard* which said that the show was playing through some practically virgin territory in Iowa, in communities where the religious element had long tried to keep out all shows. In both Oskaloosa and Ottumwa, Iowa the show did wonderful business but the stand played between the two, Knoxville, Aug. 12, rain had hurt attendance at night. The show arrived late in Leon, Ia., August 15 after a 120 mile run from Charitan, Ia. over the CB&Q Railroad. Rains had made the roads in Leon almost impossible to traverse to the lot located two miles from the center of town. The situation brought on by the weather resulted in the smallest matinee attendance so far in the season. A bad electrical storm came up just before the night show was to begin so Mr. Buchanan called it off. However, there was still some pleasantries during the stand in Leon because a new elephant, TRILBY, arrived to join the Robbins herd. The next day in Villisca, Ia. the big show musicians wore for the first

time their new navy sailor uniforms trimmed with heavy gold braid.

Additional Robbins news items in the *Billboard* report said that Kenneth Waite has a new novelty clown number titled "The Turtle." Also it was noted that Joe Lloyd, boss hostler, purchased two new teams of dappled grays and five teams of black horses in Manning, Iowa, Aug. 7, which will be used on the new tableau wagons. Each of the new tab wagons is pulled by a 6 horse hitch while the UNITED STATES tableau has a wonderful hitch of 10 blacks. (Author's note: This is the first report mentioning the UNITED STATES tableau on the show.) The article further said that the tableau wagons, FRANCE and CHINA arrived on the show in Villisca, Ia., and would be used in the parade for the first time in Tarkio, Mo. August 18. An interesting note advised that John Schiller of Marion, Ohio (brother of Robert F.) who had earlier in the season served as office man with the John Robinson Circus had joined Robbins Bros. in Marshalltown, Ia., August 8 as general utility man.

**Photo No. 13—Group of Indians that appeared in the Robbins Bros. wild west aftershow, season of 1924. Fred D. Pfening Jr. Collection.**



The following advertisement also appeared in this same issue.

**"WANTED FOR ROBBINS BROS. CIRCUS.** Prima Donna for Spec, also 2 Singers, Dancers, Musicians, with circus experience—need bass drummer, French horn, cornet, and clarinet. Musicians write or wire O.A. Gilson, bandmaster as per route. Others address Robbins Bros."

The new elephant, TRILBY, gave the show a total of six elephants. Some reports in the *Billboard* said Robbins was carrying a total of 8 after TRILBY arrived, however there is no evidence this was the case. It does appear that the elephant was acquired by outright purchase by Buchanan from William P. Hall. Bill Woodcock, Sr. mentioned that TRILBY was on hand in Robbins' quarters in early 1925 when he got there with other Hall elephants to go out with the show. Chang Reynolds' notes on TRILBY are as follows.

"TRILBY came to Hall Farm in a shipment from the West Coast in 1923 that included Katie, Jenny, Babe, Mary, Sidney, Albert and Don. They were in charge of Bert McLain from the coast to Lancaster. Woodcock calls TRILBY a 'pumpkin head' and said that Al Langdon could not do much with her. She was with Robbins Bros. until it closed, then at Hall Farm until sold to Cole Bros. Circus after the end of the 1935 tour. In 1937 she was estimated at 27 years old and 5700 pounds. In 1939, she was at the Grotto Circus in Cleveland, Ohio. Then went to the Cleveland Zoo. She was there in 1940. In 1942 she was returned to the Cole Bros. Circus and was with it through 1952. Then she went to the Kelly-Morris Circus and died on that show in 1952."

Robbins began a tour of Kansas at St. Francis, Aug 25 and played in the state 13 continuous stands before moving southward into Oklahoma with initial engagement coming at Ponca City on September 9. After the rains finally let up the show got into some very hot weather through Nebraska and Kansas. Business continued to be extremely good and according to the trade publications Robbins Bros. had developed into a first class outfit. It was claimed the show had in parade a total of 10 tableau type wagons, an air calliope, and new dens of wild beasts, which were attracting much attention. Although we have no photographic proof it is assumed the Forepaugh Lion chariot bandwagon continued in the lead of the parade and with the size Gilson's band was reported to be, no doubt a second band was formed, each having 8-10 musicians. The No. 2 band would of course ride one of the new tableau wagons from Schiller, probably the UNITED STATES. Also in all probability the sideshow and clown bands were shifted from riding atop cages to the Schiller tabs. Not only had the street parade been greatly upgraded, so had the show's performance. By mid September the *Billboard* reported that Buchanan had introduced a novel and interesting historical pageant as the closing number of the program. O.A. Gilson was also said to be arranging a complete new musical score for the performance.

After playing 8 stands in Oklahoma, the last coming at Wynoka, September 17, the show returned to Kansas for Medicine Lodge and



Anthony, then immediately went back into Oklahoma for Cameron, Altus, Hobart, and Frederick. Three stands in Texas, Vernon, Wichita Falls, and Gainesville, followed, then it was back into Oklahoma for the third time to catch six more dates. A tour of Arkansas began at Paris, October 6 with ten additional stands in the state scheduled.

The October 11, 1924 *Billboard* said that Robbins Bros. had played some new territory for it in Oklahoma and Texas with very good results. In Oklahoma the stands at Altus, Hobart and Frederick had given fine business and in Texas all three of the dates had been especially good. It was mentioned that Buchanan's new creation "An Historical Review of America," the finale of the program, is creating much favorable comment. Babe Lloyd fell from a swinging ladder in Wichita Falls, Texas, Sept. 26, but was able to continue in the performance. Final note said that Spencer Huntley was the new chief elephant man, replacing Dutch Wallace who left to join Ringling-Barnum.

The October 18, 1924 *Billboard* reported that Robbins Bros. was most fortunate to get out of Texas just before a quarantine in the state was ordered on account of an outbreak of hoof and mouth disease among cattle. Robbins left Texas on September 27 and only two days later the ban went into effect which would have been disastrous for the show. At Vinita, Okla., Oct. 3, Robbins Bros., played day and date with J. Doug Morgan's Comedians. The following stand, Wagoner, October 4, was the final one for Capt. John Tiebor, his wife, and sea lions, on the show. They left for New York and then to Cuba for a circus tour of that country. The Tiebors will return to Robbins Bros. for the 1925 season. Robbins had a truly great day in Conway, Ark., October 10. Three performances were given to accommodate the crowds. Floyd King of Harris Bros. Circus visited that day and caught both of the matinees. A final notation said that all stands in Arkansas so far had produced excellent business.

A week later the Oct 25, 1924 *Billboard* was still singing the praises of Robbins Bros. tour through Arkansas. It was stated that Fred Buchanan had his biggest week, financially, ever, beginning at Paris, Ark. October 6 with a number of turnaways recorded at Paris, Ozark, Russellville, Morrilton, Conway, and Pine Bluff. Clyde H. (High Pockets) Baudendistel joined the show at Russellville, October 8, to take charge of the elephant herd for the remainder of the season. He had formerly been with Ringling-Barnum (Author's note: As mentioned earlier, Robbins Bros. had a number of elephant trainers during the 1924 season.) At Ozark, Ark., October 7, the show day and dated with the C.R. Leggett Shows (carnival). Opposition also came the next day in Morrilton where the show day and dated the No. 2 company of J. Doug Morgan's Comedians.

The final stands in Arkansas were also extremely profitable with Batesville, Malvern, Camden, Augusta, and Hope all providing an excellent take. Hope, played October 17, was the last stand in Arkansas and then the show moved into Oklahoma for 7 more dates in that state. The initial stand at Idabelle produced



**Photo No. 14—The Riding Davenport on Robbins Bros. lot, season of 1924. Fred D. Pfening Jr. Collection.**

great business at both the matinee and evening performances. At Hugo, Okla., Oct. 20, three pumas were born in the menagerie. The next day in Madill the show day and dated with Leo Blondin's Mutt and Jeff in Havanna Company. All of the Oklahoma stands played during the week of October 20, including Hugo, Madill, Atoka, Eufaula, Holdenville, and Durant saw huge crowds attending Robbins Bros.

On October 27 the show returned to Arkansas at Ashdown which was followed by stands in DeQueen, Mena, and Waldron. Then it was back into Oklahoma for the final two stands of the 1924 season. Poteau, Oct. 31, packed them in the big top to the ring banks and the curtain came down at Stillwell, November 1, on what the Nov. 8, 1924 *Billboard* termed as the best and most successful season Fred Buchanan ever had as a showman.

Following the final performance the train was loaded and the show moved to the Buchanan quarters in Granger, Iowa for the winter. Several of the Robbins personnel joined Golden Bros. Circus, now owned by George W. Christy, for the remainder of the season.

The Nov. 29, 1924 *Billboard* said that Robbins Bros. had covered 15,078 miles in 1924, playing in 12 states and approximately 150 cities and towns. The article advised there had been but two late arrivals, a fine record for trainmaster Charles Nelson. Three performances were given at 11 stands and there were only three days of poor business. The two blowdowns coming at Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, May 2, and Huron, S.D., June 14 were noted.

Also at the end of November the trade publications said that O.A. Gilson would return as Robbins bandleader in 1925 and also that Clyde H. Baudendistel, elephant trainer, had signed a two year contract and would break 3 new bull acts. Other personnel notes said that Will Buchanan, brother of Fred, had

handled the press for the last two months of the season just completed.

News from the Granger, Iowa quarters in early December had it that new props were already being built, and that seven cages were being constructed (probably permanent type at quarters) for the new animals Buchanan had purchased. The customary press releases were made to effect the show would be much larger in 1925 and that a 130 ft round top with four 50's would be used. It remained to be seen at this early date just what the 1925 edition of Robbins Bros. would be.

With the money Buchanan had made in both 1923 and 1924 he was thinking gradiose things and the circus world was led to believe Robbins Bros. would be a major contender for 1925. This advertisement appeared in the Dec. 20, 1924 *Billboard*.

"WANTED FOR ROBBINS BROS. BIG 4 RING CIRCUS. Introducing for the season of 1925 Bert Rickman's gigantic spectacular production, 'Arabian Nights' and the 'Historical Review of America,' the latter fully patented under the copyright laws of the United States. Featuring in the circus performance, Freddie Freeman with the Four Riding Davenports—the man who has Poodles Hanneford out poodled, Capt. Tiebor's Performing Sea Lions, Ben Mohamed Troupe of Arabs, Smith's Famous Dogs, and Ponca Bill's Historic Wild West.

WANTED FOR THE BIG SHOW. Prima Donnas, Ballet Girls, Aerial and Ground Acts of all kinds. Animal Trainers. Clowns, Cowboys, Cowgirls, Fancy Ropers, Bucking Horse Riders, Bulldoggers. All big show performers address, Bert Rickman, Equestrian Director, Granger, Iowa.

No further information came from Granger quarters during the remainder of December except this most interesting advertise ment which appeared in the Dec. 27, 1924 *Billboard*.

"FOR SALE. Four box and stock cars, Robbins Bros. Circus, Granger, Iowa.

No further details are given concerning these cars and we can only speculate that evidently Buchanan had purchased newer (or better)





cars to use in the Robbins Bros. train and these four offered for sale were surplus. As noted earlier the trade publications often mentioned that Buchanan was buying additional railroad equipment, for example the Aug 30, 1924 *Billboard* recorded that Buchanan purchased the Pullman sleeper "Overlook" from Father Flanagan of Council Bluffs, Iowa (evidently the Father Flanagan of Boys Town fame) and it was delivered to Robbins Bros. at Villisca,

**Photo No. 15—Albert M. (Stick) Davenport standing in front of the Belgium tableau wagon on Robbins Bros. lot, season of 1924. Fred D. Pfening Jr. Collection.**

Iowa, on August 16. According to the article the car was to be used in 1925 as the Robbins Bros. advance car. However if our photographs are dated correctly the show in



1926 was still using the same advance car as pictured here, the one used in 1924 by Robbins and in 1923 by World Bros. Possibly the report of the purchase of the Father Flanagan is correct but that it was used to replace an older sleeper instead of being converted into an advance car. Hopefully some of the many mysteries shrouding Buchanan and his circus will in time clear up.

And so with Buchanan and his Robbins Bros. show back home in Granger, Iowa the year of 1924 faded into history. It had been a good year for him. The reader will note that Buchanan had followed a pattern he had done in the past and would continue to do—that of increasing or decreasing the size of his show while the circus season is in progress. He was a very shrewd showman and could sense good times or bad times ahead. If it looked bright he would enlarge the show in mid-season as he did in 1924 and we shall later learn also in 1925. If the horizon is gloomy then he retrenches during the season as we shall later find that he did in 1930. Through the years many showmen and fans alike have accused Buchanan of not running a Sunday School show but none ever denied he wasn't smart and knew his business as a circus man.

## HERE IS YOUR CHANCE TO CELEBRATE A 50th ANNIVERSARY

In the year of 1930, I was an acrobatic performer in the Big Top of the Sells-Floto Circus and it is now the year of 1980. I am therefore celebrating my 50th Anniversary which I call my Golden Jubilee Anniversary of that wonderful circus season of 1930 with the Sells-Floto Circus. Why should I celebrate this Golden Jubilee by myself? Allow me to suggest that you join me in this celebration of my Golden Jubilee 50th Anniversary, even though you may be far away. You can accomplish this by coming into possession of one or more of my beautiful books, *Circus Life In Pictures*.

This beautiful book, 6" x 9", contains 100 pages of glossy photos enlarged from Kodak pictures, taken in the back yard of the Sells-Floto Circus during the 1930 season. If you order from me one or more of these picture books I will autograph each book according to your wish and as an extra bonus I will insert in the centerfold of each picture book that you order, a picture of myself when I was in my twenties, at the time when I was a gymnasium instructor and a student in college studying physical education.

Every picture of myself that I insert in the centerfold of my book, *Circus Life In Pictures*, will be autographed by me according to your wishes and you will also enjoy my beautiful handwriting. My Golden Jubilee 50th Anniversary will be celebrated during the entire year of 1980. So why not order one or more picture books, some for gifts, and mail me a check or money order (no cash) for \$5.00 per book. You will be glad you did. When you mail me an order, indicate in which magazine you saw this ad, also request the bonus picture of me. I thank you.

Johnnie Schmidt, Route 3, Box 170-A, Lindale, Texas 75771



# MY TOUR WITH THE SELLS-FLOTO CIRCUS IN 1930

by Johnnie Schmidt

My tour with that two-train gigantic and fantastic Sells-Floto circus of 1930 actually started in my hometown of Waco, Texas when us three horizontal-bar performers left on Tuesday, March 18, 1930 when the weather was a spring-like day. That pickup of ours was loaded to almost its carrying capacity with three circus trunks, horizontal bars, guy-lines, tumbling mats plus suitcases, rainware and extra bed covers to be used in the berth of a circus sleeping coach. With a waterproof canvas covering the load of circus paraphernalia, we departed at 6:30 a.m. for Peru, Indiana, the winter quarters of the Sells-Floto circus. We were on the road five nights at tourist courts and six days of highway traveling without any major motor vehicle trouble, only a few flats. I was the chauffeur for the entire trip of 1107 miles. We reached Peru, Indiana at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday March 23, 1930.

The next day we unloaded our pickup and loaded our circus paraphernalia into a circus wagon and sold our pickup. On this same day it was getting colder and a misty rain fell. At 7:00 p.m. we boarded the Sells-Floto circus train and we were on our way to Chicago, Illinois. We three horizontal-bar performers left the circus train at 7:00 a.m. the next morning and walked six blocks in a heavy snowfall to the Chicago Coliseum. The next day, Wednesday, March 26, 1930 the performers set up and hung their aerial rigging. The next day there was a roll call and all the performers were present. Then came a walk-through performance. The next afternoon on March 28, there was real rehearsal but without the required wardrobe. That night there was a full dress rehearsal and every performer appeared in his or her finest of wardrobe as if it was for a real circus audience. On Saturday, March 29, the matinee was the beginning for that gigantic and fantastic Sells-Floto circus of 1930. After 16 days that thrilling performance of the Sells-Floto circus ended on Sunday night April 13, 1930.

Two days were required for moving to the gigantic Chicago Stadium. For the next 12 days these same performances of the Sells-



**Two of the horse cars of the Sells-Floto Circus being unloaded during the season of 1930. Pfening collection.**

Floto circus thrilled thousands of spectators in that Stadium. For two performances the entire 14,600 seats were occupied. After the last performance on Sunday night, April 27, 1930 the entire Sells-Floto circus traveled on iron rails to St. Louis, Mo. for a six-day engagement under a brand new white canvas Big Top. We are now in the real swing of active circus life under a brand new Big Top with three rings and two stages. After the last St. Louis performance on Sunday night, May 4, 1930 the Sells-Floto circus, traveling on two trains, headed for the open road for its 1930 circus season. Its next stand was Springfield, Ill. with a packed audience.

On Friday May 9 the circus was in Indianapolis, Ind. The night performance was a straw house almost to the ring curbs, and so on, from day to day and from city to city the Sells-Floto circus rolled along on iron rails through the state of Ohio. On Wednesday, May 28, 1930 the Sells-Floto circus came to Fulton, N.Y. where it was raining. The circus lot was muddy, so here is what is written in my

**The big top and dressing tent of the Sells-Floto Circus is shown in St. Cloud, Minn. on July 22, 1930. Taken by the author from the top of an 85 foot water tower.**

diary: "The side show wagon was stuck in mud at the entrance of the circus lot so here is how the side show wagon was pulled on to the circus grounds. It took 5 teams of 8 horses to a team (40 horses) and 4 teams of 6 horses to a team (24 horses) a total of 64 horses to pull that side show wagon to its place on the Sells-Floto circus lot." There I was watching that spectacular performance and not a single film in my camera. I would have loved to have had that picture in my collection of circus pictures.

On Friday, May 30, 1930 in Ogdensburg, N.Y. the Sells-Floto circus lot was on the edge of that 1½ mile wide St. Lawrence River. After the night performance I got on top of a standing railroad freight car and took in the sights of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). On Saturday, June 7 the circus was in Montpelier, Vt. The next day the Sells-Floto circus crossed the Canadian border for Montreal, Ontario for an 8-day engagement in the eastern part of Canada. June 12, at Bellville, Ontario, Canada, I again took time out to watch the Aurora Borealis. The Sells-Floto circus re-entered the States at Port Huron, Mich. by way of the tube under the St. Clair River on Wednesday, June 18, 1930.

On Sunday, June 22 in Detroit, Mich. the Sells-Floto circus cook-house served for breakfast bacon, liver, fried potatoes and cream of wheat. For the noon meal it was cold boiled sliced ham, pork and beans, sweet mixed pickles. For the third meal it was roast pork, potatoes and gravy, beets and the desert







was Ward's cup cakes. On Monday, June 23, 1930, the Sells-Floto circus elephants came very near to stampeding in Lansing, Mich. What caused it I never heard. On Monday June 30 in Peru, Ill. one small monkey with a long leash broke loose and ran up the men's dressing tent but soon came back to the ground and was caught by the long leash it had on its collar.

Friday, July 4, 1930 in Platteville, Wis. the circus cook-house had a good menu. For breakfast there was bacon, fried eggs, cream of wheat cereals, bread and butter. The noon meal was cream cheese, stewed lima beans, bread and butter and one peach to each diner. For the evening meal it was chicken, cream gravy, English peas, rolls and butter and the desert was sliced pineapple and cookies. The Sells-Floto circus personnel responded with an entertainment after the last meal for that day, between shows two separate boxing matches were held by four boxers. The ladies had different types of foot races and a large group for a tug-of-war and a comedy wedding. The Sells-Floto circus entered the state of Wisconsin on Thursday, July 3, 1930.

Most of the circus show grounds were in Fair grounds with the afternoons from warm to hot and cool nights. At Green Bay, Wis. where the circus grounds were on the edge of a large lake some of the circus people went for a swim. On Sunday, July 13, as the bear cage was being pulled to the circus train in Menasha, Wis. where we showed that day, the left rear wheel came off when it was near the loading area. On Saturday, July 19, 1930, at LaCrosse, Wis. one of the working men that helps to erect the Big Top killed a 3½ foot rattlesnake with

**The rear of the second section of the Floto show is pictured near Altoona, Pa., on the horseshoe bend on the way to Wilkes-Barre, Pa., Aug. 24, 1930. Photo by the author.**

nine rattles near the circus ground (that is what is written in my diary). On Tuesday, July 22, 1930 in St. Cloud, Minn. after the matinee I climbed an 85 ft steel ladder up to the gallery of a large overhead water tank and took two pictures of the Sells-Floto tented city below.

On Thursday, July 30, in Minneapolis, Minn. a local surgeon operated on a Sells-Floto circus seal's right eye for a cataract. The seal would hold its breath when given ether therefore ½ gram of morphine was injected to put the seal to sleep. I took several pictures of this unusual outdoor operation on a circus lot. On Saturday, July 26 on our way to Rochester, Minn. both circus trains were delayed at Red Wing, Minn. on account of a 25 foot washout on the railroad track. We reached Rochester, Minn. at 12:30 p.m. Matinee started at 5:00 p.m. and the night show was also delayed. On Sunday July 27 at New Ulm, Minn. it was the hottest day of the 1930 Sells-Floto circus season with 110 degrees. On Sunday August 3, on our way to Colorado Springs the circus train stopped at Colby, Kansas where I got on a circus wagon on the flats for the 220 miles yet to go. At Garland, Colo. the second section train got another locomotive for now we were

**The grandstand plank wagon #108 with a six horse team on the way to the lot in Terre Haute, Ind. May 8, 1930. Photo by the author.**



being pulled upgrade by two railroad locomotives. All was level country except the last 100 miles. I saw lots of jack rabbits, prairie dogs and ground squirrels. The circus train reached Colorado Springs at 1:30 p.m. Mountain Standard Time with Pike's Peak in full view from the circus grounds. On Monday, August 4 at Colorado Springs, it was hot in the afternoon and cool at night, both houses were nearly full. Electrical rain storms came after the night show.

On Tuesday, August 5 at Denver where it was hot in the afternoon and cool at night we could see snow-covered mountains. There were packed matinees and straw house at night. On Saturday, August 2 at Smith Center, Kansas, the Flying Thrillers and the Pallenberg bear act left to play summer and fall Fair dates. On Tuesday, August 12 at Galesburg, Ill. the flying Concello's came on to the show. On Saturday, August 23, at Wheeling, West Va. another unusual occurrence took place. The Sells-Floto circus train unloaded in Bridgeport, Ohio and the circus wagons crossed over the Ohio River bridge to Wheeling, West Va. The circus lot was in Fair Park.

On Sunday August 24, on our way to Wilkes-Barre, Pa. a distance of 427 miles, I experienced thrills that few people can ever have. I left my circus train berth at 8:30 a.m. and when the circus train stopped at Vandergrift, Pa. 20 miles east of Pittsburgh at 9:30 a.m. I and a few other circus performers took seats on wagon No. 107 which was loaded with seat planks. When the circus train went around that famous horse shoe bend near Altoona, Pa. I took pictures of the front part of the circus train. When the train was coming down slowly on the long grade the brake shoes on the train were producing blue smoke. On this long run the Sells-Floto circus train passed through two short and one long tunnel. All of us flat-car riders were lying flat on the wagon for safety reasons while going through the tunnels. We saw some beautiful mountains, valleys and water falls. I wore my rain coat to keep warm. I wore glasses to keep coal smoke and cinders out of my eyes that were coming from the locomotive that was pulling the circus train. I had with me sandwiches and a canteen of water for this long open air trip. I got off the flats at 7:30 p.m. after a 10-hour ride when the circus train made a short stop. My face was covered with plenty of smoke. We arrived at Wilkes-Barre at 11:30 p.m. After I had washed my smoky face, I got off the circus train and headed for a cafe to eat. What a trip that was, 427 miles.

Monday, August 25 in Wilkes-Barre is the 100th town the Sells-Floto is showing in and the 274th and 275th performances. On Tuesday, August 26 at Easton, Pa. I took a picture of 17 men carrying one Big Top center pole from the pole wagon to its place for the Big Top. Wednesday and Thursday, August 27 and 28, Mr. John Ringling saw both night performances on this two-day stand. On Thursday, August 28, 1930 a commercial photographer took a group picture of all the performers just before the matinee spec started. I have one of these group pictures in my possession.

On Sunday, August 31, 1930 in Washington, D.C. we arrived at 10:00 a.m. I took a street car



to town and ate at Thompson's, then out to see some of Washington's important places such as the Treasury Building, Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial, Smithsonian Institute (where I saw Lindberg's airplane "The Spirit of St. Louis"), the National Capital (where I saw the inside of the President's Office), the Senate Building, U.S. Post Office, then went to the circus lot where I ate the evening meal then walked three miles to the circus train at Benning Viaduct, Tuesday, September 2, 1930 in Washington, D.C. I went back to the national capital, then to the White House where a guide showed people some of the inside of the White House.

Friday, September 5 we had a matinee show only at Salisbury, Md. Departed from Salisbury at 5:40 p.m. for Cape Charles, Md. I stood on the steps of the sleeping car all the way of 90 miles. Then all of the Sells-Floto personnel boarded a large boat and departed from Cape Charles at 11:30 p.m. for the boat trip across Chesapeake Bay. We arrived on the other side of the Chesapeake Bay at 2:20 a.m. on Saturday, September 6 and had to wait on the inside of the boat for 30 minutes until the coaches arrived. The entire two trains of the circus were carried across the Chesapeake Bay on huge barges. I would have liked to have seen this gigantic transportation of the entire circus, but it was night, to I had to miss a spectacular event. When the coaches did arrive everybody was glad to be back on solid ground. Then we boarded the circus train and headed for Norfolk, Va.

On Sunday, September 7 I rode the flats again to Wilson, N.C. where we arrived at 11:30 a.m. I found a place where family style meals were served—fried chicken, corn bread, sweet potato salad, fresh lima beans—all for 75c. Monday, September 8, it rained after our night show. On Sunday, September 14 at Ashville, N.C. after 7:45 a.m. I was on the platform of our coach in the second section of the circus train which had a second locomotive in the center. The train was winding so much in these North Carolina mountains that I saw the Andrew's Geyser four times, three times on one side of the circus train and one time on the other side. We passed through four short and two long tunnels. The thermometer on the



The midway and marquee of the Sells-Floto Circus in Detroit, Mich. In July of 1930. Pfening collection.

platform of our coach was at 72 degrees before entering the long tunnels and on 85 degrees on leaving the tunnels on account of the smoke and steam from the two locomotives that were pulling the second section up to the top of the mountain. The locomotive in the center of the circus train was removed when we reached the top, ten miles before arriving in Ashville, N.C. where the slogan is "City of the Sky". We had two meals on the circus lot that day. Sunday, September 14 we had a hard rain at 5:00 p.m. Monday, September 15 in Ashville, Tom Mix appeared in person at noon.

The circus train arrived in Athens, Ga. at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, September 20, 1930. I walked to town, up a steep hill, then to the circus grounds. Hard rain started at 10:00 a.m. There was sloppy mud inside the cook-house grounds, deep mud all over the circus lot and on the inside of the Big Top. The night show started at 8:00 p.m. and was almost empty. During the hard rain, the men's dressing tent leaked like a sieve. Sunday, September 21 at Atlanta, Ga. I left the show train at 10:30 a.m. I

**Tom Mix is pictured walking through the backyard during the Detroit, Mich. stand on July 21 and 22, 1930. Pfening collection.**

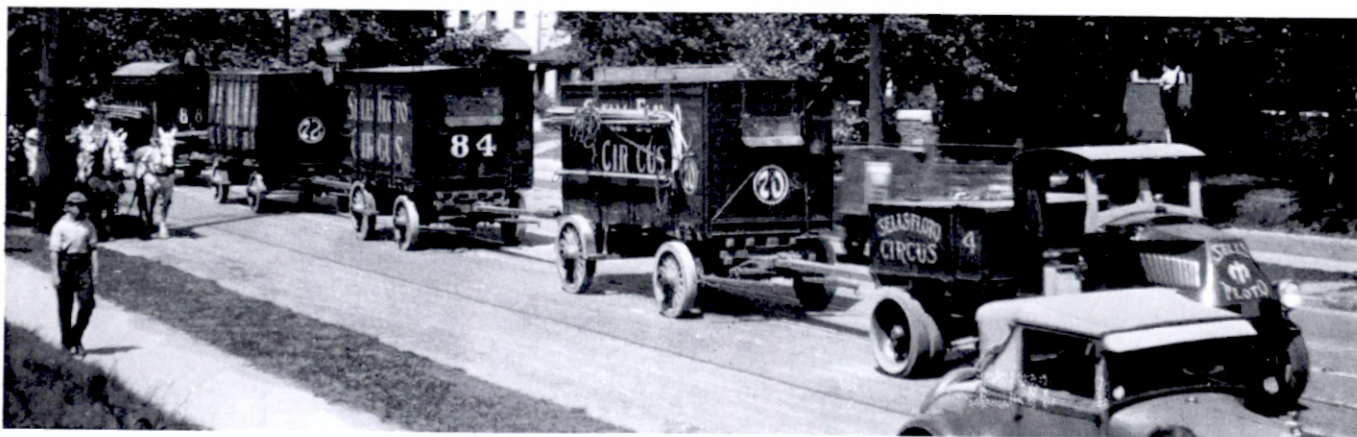


This one sheet litho featuring Tom Mix was made up special for the 1930 season. It was printed by the Illinois Litho Co. of Chicago. Circus World Museum Collection.

went to a cafe four blocks away to eat, then I went to Decatur on a streetcar. I transferred there to Stone Mountain, total distance was 19 miles. Then I walked up the highway 1½ miles to the stone mountain and took several pic-







**ATHENS**  
Afternoon and Night  
KING AVENUE  
SHOW GROUNDS

THE ONLY BIG  
**CIRCUS**  
COMING THIS YEAR!

**20**  
SATURDAY  
SEPTEMBER

**SELLS-FLOTO CIRCUS**

PRESENTS  
THE GREATEST OF  
ALL CIRCUS STARS  
**TOM MIX**  
IN PERSON  
AND  
**TONY**  
THE WONDER HORSE

200 BIG ACTS  
5 HERDS OF ELEPHANTS  
57 CLOWNS  
470 HORSES  
1165 PEOPLE  
3 RINGS—2 STAGES

SENSATIONAL ACTS  
FROM EUROPE AND  
THE ORIENT

**TWICE DAILY**  
2-8 P.M.

APPEARING AT  
EVERY PERFORMANCE

**DOORS OPEN**  
1-7 P.M.

Downtown Ticket Sale Circus Day at Moon-Winn Drug Store, 197 Clayton Street  
Same Price as Charged on Grounds.

tures of the carvings that are high up on the side of that stone mountain. Then I went back to Atlanta, then to the cook-house at 4:00 p.m., to the cars at dark, then to bed in my circus train berth.

The menu for Monday, September 22 in

This newspaper ad used for the Athens, Ga., stand on Sept. 20, 1930, is typical of those used by the Sells-Floto Circus that season. Pfening collection.

Atlanta, Ga. was breakfast—scrambled eggs and hot cakes; noon—onion beef hash, spaghetti and rolls; evening—roast beef, mashed potatoes, peas, lettuce salad and one piece of pie. The matinee was very good. The night house people were sitting nearly up to the ring curbs. That night was the first time this season that I watched them take down the Big Top and load everything. Monday, September 29 in Nashville, Tenn. was the last day for the 1930 season of Sells-Floto circus.

Between shows I had a baggage carrier take my circus trunk to the union depot and I bought a railroad ticket to Waco, Texas. I checked my circus trunk on my fare ticket, then went back to the circus lot to do my last performance for the season. For the last meals at the circus cook-house we had for breakfast scrambled eggs and hot cakes. For the noon meal we had spaghetti, goose liver sausage and sour pickles. For the evening meal we had cold pork chops, mashed potatoes, potato salad and hominy salad and one piece of apple pie.

Tom Mix autographed his picture for me. After the night show I went to the depot and left Nashville, Tenn. on a passenger train at 11:59 p.m. for my home in Waco by way of Memphis, Tenn. On this same train were several other circus people all on their way to their homes. We arrived in Memphis at 7:00 a.m. where we went to a cafe to eat and got sandwiches and donuts for the trip. We changed trains and left Memphis at 8:25 a.m. and arrived in Dallas at 9:15 p.m. We left Dallas at 11:00 p.m. and arrived in Waco at 1:30 a.m. after having been away from home for seven months. (I no longer live in Waco.) Some of my people met me at the train depot and thus ends another fantastic circus season for me.

If you want a copy of the above article which is 3 pages long 8½ x 11, for your circus collections, with black type on white, pink or light blue paper, you choose the color, I will mail it to you post paid for \$2. Johnnie Schmidt, Route 3, Box 170-A, Lindale, Texas 75771.

**1980 CHS  
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BARABOO,  
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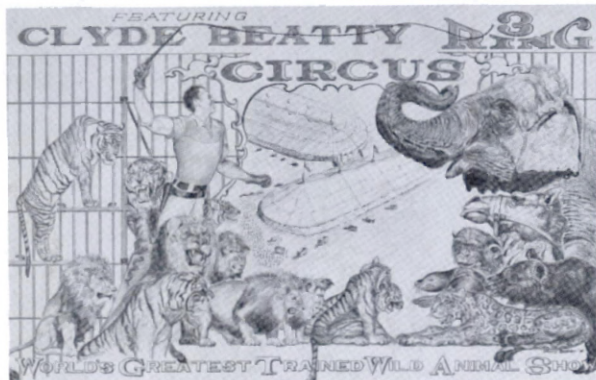
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Rare photos of real circus life compiled in a 100 page 6"x9" book with 100 glossy photos enlarged from kodak pictures which I took in the 1920's and 1930's during the years when I was a circus performer in the Big Top. Several pictures of 8 beautiful Belgian horses pulling circus street parade wagons, several pictures of 10 to 12 elephants either walking or standing and how elephants were unloaded at the circus train, line-up of cowboys and cowgirls with their mounts, bare-back riders, lion and tiger trainers in action with these animals, ponies, dogs, monkeys, clowns, acrobats, flying act in action, a line-up of 18 beautiful girl aerialists and much, much more. There are no more traveling big circuses but you can see how they did travel. This beautiful circus picture book should be in everyones household, as it is a real collectors item, so that children, teenagers and others can see what was in the past, also, makes an excellent gift. Send \$5 per book in check or money order (not cash) to Johnnie Schmidt, Route 3, Box 170-A, Lindale, Texas 75771. Money back guarantee is for 10 days. Now read the above again. I thank you.





# Rare collection of Clyde Beatty original poster art now available on a limited basis in a series of 6 historical collector's pieces.



Print #1: Clyde Beatty — Steel Arena — and Animals

Comments from early purchasers: March 8, 1980, Roger Smith, former cage boy and trainer for Clyde Beatty: "The print is fantastic—I am highly discriminating on animal art. You have highly defined and projected the magic of Clyde Beatty, who remains the epitome of wild animal performers in the American school of tradition. The Booker Series will make history, as Beatty's legend continues."

Tom Parkinson: "I was delighted to see your ad in *Bandwagon* for the Beatty poster art. Yes, I still agree that it has the extra touch that identifies true circus art."

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Printed on 100# white gloss, vellum stock, the crispness of the shaded detail pencil work is amazing. This offer good only for a limited time at \$7.50 per print. California residents add 6% sales tax. Send check or money order to: Show Ring Corporation of America, Suite 116, 1670 S. Amphlett Blvd., San Mateo, CA 94402.

## The circus art of J.P. Booker

I have been sketching the circus in many forms for the past 50 years and what wonderful memories they are to me.

My desire to depict the great days of the railroad circus has lead to serious works of art now and my collection is still growing.

From a childhood background of accompanying my father (a horse-drawn, field artillery colonel in the regular Army) on his tours of the circuses to study their efficiency and systems for comparable use of the U.S. Army, began my intense interest in the circus.

As a small boy I was always sketching and resketching the long circus trains and wagons.

My love of horses, handed down to me by my father, drew me close to the circus draft horse. I sketched, carved, studied and took in all the detail of these marvelous horses in action.

The constant visits and revisits, to capture in fine detail all the serious parts of this in-motion part of the daily struggle—hammered home to me their realism (tell it like it really is).

In the spring of 1956 Clyde Beatty, through Bill Moore, offered me a great challenge—an invitation to help with the Beatty Circus posters. This allowed me to create new paper art and test my imagination. My ambition was to submit poster art on a par with the Strobbridge and Erie Lithography Company artists. Using a Roland Butler (famous for circus art and advertising) approach for the "Clyde Beatty—Steel Arena and Animals" poster, it was designed to bring out the personality of Clyde and offer the total wild animal flavor of his show. The series of 6 that were designed, finished and presented to the show, represent a most productive period in the development of my circus art!

The Cisco Kid posters were difficult and most necessary as Moore and I agreed that Duncan Renaldo should be featured big. This caused problems as it lead to the expected comment from Clyde Beatty, "Who is the star attraction?" We argued that, as Renaldo had been signed to help counteract the loss of circus traffic to TV ("see top TV star at the circus"), he should be given suitable star publicity a la Floto's Tom Mix. Clyde agreed with equal billing and 3 posters

featuring "The Cisco Kid" were submitted.

Clyde and I both felt that had his circus survived long enough to use this series, they would have helped to give the show that spark it needed in advertising to depict the quality of his circus.

My attention then was to circus style letterheads. I designed and executed the "Buffalo Bill" piece for the CFA tent #80 in 1960. My good friend Don Francis pestered me with a challenge—"Design a very, very fancy and interesting letterhead" for his fine miniature circus and circusiana. This was a real stopper—complete with leaping tiger.

These prompted Chappie Fox, now V.P. of RBBB, to ask me to illustrate the two famous hook rope hitch events in his book "Performing Horses."

Realistically presenting the horses, wagons and lot scenes of the horse-drawn circus will eventually lead to the book I have planned for the past 35 years titled "Of Men, Horses, Wagons and Mud." ... All this with still time for my business, horses, animals, circus, miniature circus and the new show, "The Royal Horse Fair." ... and art, always circus art.

